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**Widening participation initiatives and the experience
of underrepresented students at three elite
institutions: a comparative study**

Katherine L. Friend

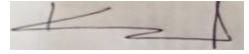
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The University of Edinburgh

2016

Declaration of authorship

I confirm that I, Katherine L. Friend, have composed this thesis. The work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'K. L. Friend', is written on a light-colored rectangular background.

31 October 2016
Katherine L. Friend

Abstract

This nested multi-site case study uses data from interviews with thirty underrepresented students to explore how these students experience elite universities. Although greater numbers of underrepresented students are enrolling in university than ever before, those from non-traditional backgrounds are largely excluded from elite universities. Elite universities in the United States, England, and Scotland are all striving for increasingly higher levels of excellence, status, and funding to raise and maintain their global positions as university rankings continue to affect student choice and perception of value. The expansion of higher education during the past several decades has fostered discussions pertaining to the social characteristics of the student body, and whether enough is being done to include individuals traditionally excluded from higher education. Simply developing widening participation initiatives, however, does not eliminate inequality in the university system. This thesis considers discussions relating to higher education expansion, development of widening participation policy, costs associated with higher education, and the social characteristics and constructions of the underrepresented student in the three nations.

The four key findings resulting from the student interviews are organised into the three themes of economic, social, and cultural capital. The first finding was that the students who lacked accessible economic capital were unable to participate in social events. The inability to participate produced feelings of exclusion. The second key finding was that students who were most debt averse reported the least amount of debt. This debt aversion meant some students worked nearly full-time or strictly managed their income. The third key finding was that students who were able to minimise their social and cultural differences, such as changing their accent, were more likely to report feelings of belonging. The fourth key finding was that, although the widening participation policy agenda focuses predominately on economic disadvantage and access, very little attention is given to elite universities' *habitus*, which perpetuate privilege and complicate feelings of belonging.

One of the most pronounced areas for further research that has come out of this study is whether the fear of stigmatisation in identifying widening participation students outweighs the potential benefits in acknowledging and creating a community for those students. Ultimately, the hope of this study is that, by understanding the experiences of such students who gain access to an elite university, we can learn from their experiences and how, moving forward, not only help a greater number of underrepresented students to attend these elite universities, but also support those students throughout their university years.

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A thank you is also owed to my lovely partner David, who listened each night as I discussed my project at the dinner table. His own ability to push his students' understandings of early modern history and politics while remaining accessible is one of his greatest attributes as an educator in higher education. I only hope I can follow his example.

My greatest appreciation and dedication of this project goes to the 30 students featured in this thesis. Each participant answered questions pertaining to their family background, experiences of racial and class inequality, feelings of inadequacy, of belonging, and of persisting regardless of the challenges. Thank you for reliving your personal experiences and providing me with countless details of your undergraduate experience at an elite university. Thank you for trusting me with such deeply personal information. For some of you, these details had not been previously expressed. My only hope is that this study provided you an outlet for reflection. My desire to place your voice at the forefront of this project and co-construct your experience is what propelled this thesis to completion even though at times I struggled. I must apologize to you, however, for not being allowed more space to adequately tell each individual story. Cut from each chapter or placed in appendices are tens of thousands of words you expressed about your lives, making your stories, while told, incomplete. For that, I am sorry. I will do my best to publish your experiences and make your voices heard.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The origins of this study

This thesis explores the experiences of thirty students from underrepresented groups at three elite universities in three jurisdictions. It demonstrates the complex and varied nature of the student experience and, furthermore, how factors such as access to capital, hierarchies (social, cultural, economic), and boundaries (socioeconomic status, race, attending a low-progression school or residing in a low-progression neighbourhood) transcend government policy and university initiatives, and influence student identity. I endeavoured to compare three elite institutions in three jurisdictions to gain a greater understanding of the varied nature of the student experience. A full discussion pertaining to their selection is provided in chapter 4, but the three institutions, although seemingly very different at the outset, were all large research institutions under pressure not only to compete in a global market, but also to widen participation closer to home. This thesis is primarily based on interview data. It demonstrates the way in which students from underrepresented groups draw on a range of capitals to navigate daily life and negotiate identity with others. It pulls together government policy and financial policy to show how both have an impact at the institutional level (chapters 3 and 5). The thesis provides background to larger systemic issues by including an overview of understandings of a range of salient concepts: social class, race, capital, identity, and student transitions (chapter 2). It explores how students' economic, social, and cultural capital affects their university experience (chapters 6, 7, and 8). Finally, it examines how students experience the *habitus* (or culture) of an elite university (chapter 8). The aim of this introduction is to present the origins, conceptual framework, and overall structure of the thesis.

From the beginning, I endeavoured to gain an understanding of how students experience university, not just higher education more generally. I decided that

my approach would be a small-scale qualitative comparative study. The breadth of examining widening participation practices and university culture allowed me to explore and compare the similarities and differences in the experiences across three jurisdictions.

Prior to 2013, I was employed as the Director of the First- and Second-Year Experience at a large research university in the US. My responsibility was to direct and coordinate programme activity for a student support programme that served over 600 students each year. The mission was to admit, retain, and graduate first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students. My experience in this programme introduced me to the uneven social, cultural, and economic experiences of undergraduates. My initial intention when beginning doctoral study was to assess the intersections and effects of social class, race, and gender on patterns of higher education participation and the experience of students from underrepresented backgrounds. While it was my intent to consider the underrepresented student through the lens of gender, gender did not emerge as a key theme from the data. A decision, therefore, was made to focus on the issues most prominently displayed by the student interviews: social class and race. My preliminary reading around the subject indicated that, first, to address the underrepresented student experience I would need to examine the policy context, and, second, that the literature on forms of capital would provide key organising ideas.

1.2 Development of research ideas

I came to this project from a humanities (particularly history) background. While employed at an American university, I attended a convention sponsored by the American College Personnel Association. There I heard a paper, 'Putting on my man face', given by Edwards and Jones (2009). It presented the importance of masculinity and gender performance in shaping student identity. As I reflected afterwards, I could see similar challenges linked to the negotiation

of gender and social class in the underrepresented students at my own elite university. The spark for this thesis began from listening to the paper, but was grounded in my four and a half years of working in higher education for a student enrichment office devoted to the retention of underrepresented students. The central philosophy of this office was to assist the university in creating an inclusive campus climate (otherwise understood as *habitus*) in which all members of the campus community felt valued, respected, and free to participate and achieve their highest academic and professional potential. These values are certainly reflected in (and perhaps drove) this thesis. In my role, much of my time was spent helping students navigate what they reported as a sometimes hostile campus climate. Because of my experience, I had an enormous amount of enthusiasm for the subject. At root, the desire to educate myself more formally about the student experience, and to provide a better experience for such students, prompted this thesis.

Upon moving to the UK in 2012, I wondered whether the experience of Scottish and English students differed from those of their American peers'. What were the students' experiences in these different environments, and what social characteristics either prohibited or permitted their academic success? All three nations experienced large periods of expansion in higher education. This expansion created a stratified system between 'elite', 'research' universities and those newly created with the intent to integrate different demographics into higher education. 'Elite' in this study is defined as universities ranked in the top 100 global institutions (see chapter 4) and considered to be leading institutions in their regions. Despite many of the large government efforts to widen participation and integrate underrepresented students into all different types of universities, overall, elite universities have maintained previous student demographics. By continuing to admit largely the same student type (middle-class, white), the culture at these universities has also remained the same. These factors make the underrepresented student experience so interesting to study because it provides researchers insight into how these students navigate the

social and cultural terrain of an elite university, and cope with the differences in available financial capital.

Furthermore, the education systems in these nations were constructed differently because of each nation's historical background and cultural composition. As a result, each had its own manner when categorising (and measuring) individuals traditionally excluded from higher education. In the US and UK, 'widening participation' is a somewhat generic term that means targeting those traditionally excluded from higher education. Stevenson, Clegg, & Lefever (2010) described the continuing ambiguity behind identifying and classifying widening participation students. Numerous studies (for examples, Moore, Sanders, & Higham, 2013; Stevenson, *et al.*, 2010) agree that underrepresented students are not in fact a homogenous group, but range in identity, social characteristics, and background. The literature on widening participation can be just as diverse as the classification itself.

To understand inclusion and diversity efforts, which I began to understand as widening participation, I had to develop an understanding of jurisdictional policy. The collection and discussion of policy documents across the three jurisdictions represented the most challenging aspect of this thesis. England and Scotland are continuously publishing new policy papers and legislation, creating a very restless system. In contrast, policy in the American jurisdiction mostly reflects the priorities of the 1960s. While there have been updates over the last 50 to 60 years, the interpretation and application of policy differ by state. Furthermore, since public universities are largely autonomous from government and state control, only constitutional laws (e.g. Civil Rights) are enforced. The universities are otherwise left alone to make decisions that fit their (and the states') needs.

To attract students traditionally excluded from higher education, both the US and UK have enacted policies (see chapter 5) and implemented different types of interventions. Interventions include programmes such as school-to-

university pipeline programmes designed to raise higher education aspirations (e.g. Sutton Trust in the UK, and TRIO in the US) and contextual admission. In 2003, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) concluded that the effort to widen participation was not shared equally between higher education providers and relied disproportionately on post-1992 universities. This conclusion reflected elite institutions' ability to maintain their power and prestige due to their being largely released from the widening participation effort by the organisations designed to enforce widening participation (Archer, 2007). For that reason it is important to understand the underrepresented experience at elite institutions, but I was also personally confronted by the complex social and cultural aspects at the heart of widening participation. Early in the project's development, I began to see how social class and race continue to shape the culture at elite universities despite university initiatives and government policy. How that culture affected the thirty participants is the subject of the last findings chapter.

1.3 Research qualification

Undertaking a comparative international study was extremely complex; some of these complexities, perhaps due to naiveté, were unforeseen at the start. The chapters on jurisdictional widening participation policy (chapters 2 and 5) indicate participation rates in England and Scotland, but the US Department of Education publishes only raw numbers instead of participation rates. Accordingly, direct comparisons were challenging. Due to the opportunistic sampling (see chapter 4) there were four more American participants than Scottish, and two more than English. Students at all three institutions seemed open about their experiences. Each student engaged with the research topic and answered the questions posed by sharing their personal stories. The stories allowed me to explore their experiences in some depth. My American nationality and understanding of the education system, however, may have

resulted in the American participants' being more comfortable in the interviews than were their UK peers.

To maintain confidentiality of the institutional sites, I named the institutions in each jurisdiction after natural and man-made land barriers. The name 'Great Lakes' refers to the university in the region in the American Midwest that includes 8 states. The lakes divide the region into different economic, social, and cultural identities. 'South Hadrian' and 'Antonine' refer to the universities in England and Scotland, and take cues from the man-made walls built by the Romans in northern England and lowland Scotland. Each represented a barrier created by the Roman Empire to divide the landmass and maintain control over their jurisdiction.

Also important to note about Great Lakes is that some students conflated their race/ethnicity with their nationality. For instance, some of the Great Lakes students identified as Mexican—though their ethnicity would be Chicano/a. Others identified as Hmong American, Vietnamese/Chinese, or Laotian—all of which Great Lakes would consider (rightly or wrongly) to be Southeast Asian by way of ethnicity. For the purposes of this study, the terms the students used to identify their own racial and ethnic background will be used. This has been done to reflect how these students identify, and doing so helps locate the students within the wider American context. Only two of the Great Lakes participants were born outside the US (Samantha and Christopher); as a result, all of the other students could have 'American' included in their description (for instance Mexican American).

1.4 Overview of the chapters

Chapter 2 explores the literature relevant to this thesis. It reviews the social characteristics of university students to get a more in-depth understanding of which groups are 'traditional' university participants, and which groups are

underrepresented. By gaining a greater understanding of the social characteristics (social class, race, socioeconomic status) of these groups, and how these characteristics drive participation, it contributes to a fuller discussion of widening participation. In chapter 2, I also trace the recent literature pertaining to widening participation. It incorporates empirical studies that contribute to the understanding of measures of capital, race, and gender with theoretical frameworks regarding capital, critical race theory, and performance. Bourdieu's understanding of capital is used as one framework to understand social class hierarchies and how power is reproduced through education. Chapter 2 also engages with large-scale research that examines the barriers (economic, social, cultural) that prevent both inclusion in and access to higher education. The empirical overview is divided into subsections of quantitative and qualitative academic research. The quantitative research is used to identify patterns of participation and rates of retention for different social groups. It often reflects a categorical view of identity and has a fixed view of variables like social class and race. On the other hand, qualitative research more often regards social and racial identity as something that can be negotiated with others and may change over time. Rather than consider social class as a characteristic predominantly inherited from one's family, much of the qualitative research understands the individual as actively constructing their social class and racial identity. The review considers these types of methodological approaches to gain a better understanding of the student experience.

In chapter 3, I review financial aspects of higher education. Chapter 3 discusses the costs of university attendance across the three jurisdictions, and examines the following forms of student support: tuition fee loans, maintenance loans, non-repayable grants, and bursaries. It argues that, while the US and UK governments have placed increased emphasis on more individuals' entering higher education, the governments have sought ways to spread the cost from the government to a shared model with the individual. This cost-sharing model has been prevalent in the American higher education system since the 1960s,

but this model is more recent in England. Such cost-sharing has led to a discussion over the distribution of debt between more- and less-advantaged students. A key theme identified in this review is that across the three jurisdictions poorer students are taking on disproportionately more debt than their middle-class peers due to decreasing bursaries and grants, and the lack of available family economic capital. The chapter also serves to provide background information for the discussion of how economic capital affects the student experience in chapter 6.

Chapter 4 lays out my epistemological, ontological, and methodological positions. It outlines the rationale for selecting a qualitative, nested multi-site case study. It demonstrates the suitability of the interpretive paradigm as a means for addressing the research questions. My intention in chapter 4 is to also provide an account of how this research study was conducted and analysed. Furthermore, it deals with ethical issues raised with conducting a qualitative study.

Chapter 5 is the bridge between the background material provided by chapters 2 and 3 and the student interviews in chapters 6, 7, and 8. Chapter 5 is the first findings chapter. It begins by tracing the expansion (and stratification) of higher education in the three nations. The second section examines government policies and strategies designed to widen participation as well as the measures of social characteristics in the US, England, and Scotland. It examines the ways in which three elite institutions (Great Lakes University, South Hadrian University, and Antonine University) apply national policy initiatives, engage with government regulator regimes (in the case of the UK institutions), and create their own initiatives to support underrepresented students on their campuses. To understand the institutional initiatives more fully, chapter 5 introduces first-hand interview accounts from widening participation officers considered experts at their institutions. These respondents serve to provide background to (and insights regarding) jurisdictional and institutional policy. Finally, this chapter offers a critique of each university's efforts. By

understanding the social characteristics of students (chapter 2); the cost and distribution of student debt (chapter 3); and the expansion of higher education, policies, and initiatives aimed at supporting underrepresented students (first section of chapter 5), a greater understanding of the student experience can be achieved.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 report on the findings from the interviews with students. Chapter 6 builds on the introductory data examined in chapter 3 to explore how a student's economic capital affects their experience. Drawing on data from interviews with students, it argues that, while economic inequalities are important, finance alone does not determine whether students from poor backgrounds enter higher education. This chapter addresses issues such as the impact of economic capital, attitudes to debt, and employment. Building upon the discussion of economic capital, in chapter 7 I include the social resources and networks that students use to try to secure advantage. In this chapter, both the creation and nature of the students' social networks in the three universities are analysed. The chapter highlights the family pressures faced by the students at each institution and the social connections they made as a result of attendance. Particular attention is paid to the strategies used by the students to develop new social networks. The final findings chapter, chapter 8, considers the nature of the students' cultural understandings. It adopts Bourdieu's (1993) understanding of cultural production (routines, communication styles, and internalised patterns) to consider how cultural reproduction affects the life chances of an individual. The chapter examines what Savage (2015) labels as 'legitimate culture', which is grounded in middle-class, white habits and reflected in the *habitus* of the three elite universities. Particular strategies to transcend existing cultural capital and forge new cultural identities are also explored.

Chapter 9 concludes the thesis. It offers an overview of the scholarly contribution of the thesis, reflects upon my own academic development, and offers final conclusions and recommendations for future research.

The premise of this thesis is to explore the experiences of underrepresented students who manage to gain access to and enrol in one of three elite higher education institutions. By organising their experiences into three themes (economic, social, and cultural capital), the hope is that by understanding the experiences of the students who managed to gain access to an elite university, we can learn from their experiences and how, moving forward, we can assist a greater number of underrepresented students to attend these elite universities. Although greater numbers of underrepresented students are enrolling in university than ever before, they, nevertheless, are largely excluded from elite universities. Simply developing widening participation initiatives does not eliminate inequality in the university system. People, to some extent, form their identities based on their social interactions and their cultural understandings of self. This understanding of identity suggests that there is unevenness in the application of social and cultural barriers. Put simply, social and cultural structures apply more strongly to characteristics that are clearly visible (such as race) than characteristics potentially less visible (such as social class). Such differences in social and cultural characteristics have an overarching effect on a student's ability to adapt to campus *habitus*, and they significantly affect a student's experience.

Chapter 2: Factors affecting higher education participation: a literature review

This chapter reviews recent literature about widening participation. It is divided into five sections. The first reviews the social characteristics of university students in each of the three countries studied. By understanding characteristics (such as social class, race, gender, socioeconomic status, and prior educational attainment) that drive participation, a fuller understanding of the widening participation student can be gained. The second section specifically reviews widening participation literature. Sections three and four consider the quantitative and qualitative literature that has contributed to the understanding of the student experience. It draws on empirical literature that addresses the complexities behind the experience of students traditionally excluded from higher education. In interrogating the literature, a central question was asked: What are the factors affecting and barriers prohibiting higher education participation? To answer this question, the review critically examines literature on the effectiveness of widening participation initiatives, and patterns of participation relating to social class and race. The fifth section establishes the key concepts for this thesis: capital, *habitus*, race theory, and identity.

2.1 Social characteristics and the construction of the underrepresented student in the US, England, and Scotland

All three jurisdictions define and measure underrepresented groups in higher education differently. In the US, the 'underrepresented student' is constructed in relation to racial and socioeconomic status. In the UK, the 'underrepresented student' is constructed primarily in terms of social class (David, 2009). Policy-makers on both sides of the Atlantic have struggled to create policies that erode social class and racial differences within the student population, particularly in

those institutions that might be described as 'elite'. Despite widening participation initiatives, elite universities in the US and UK continue to trail newer or less prestigious institutions in their recruitment and acceptance of underrepresented students.

2.1.1 Social characteristics of university students in the US

More than 60% of the total US population have some experience in higher education (including community colleges), although the proportion of the population with a university degree is much lower at about 28% (Pell Institute, 2015). Since higher education began expanding after the Second World War, there has been little change in the social profile of students in elite universities. The majority of students enrolled in US universities are white, middle-class, and of traditional university age (17-23 years) (Snyder & Dillow, 2013). Across the US, participation rates are generally lower for individuals from minority ethnic groups and poorer backgrounds (Snyder & Dillow, 2013). Students classified as white or Asian are more likely to be on four-year degree programmes in universities while those from black, Hispanic, or Alaskan/Native backgrounds are more likely to be on two-year programmes in community colleges (Snyder & Dillow, 2013). Table 2.1 demonstrates these nationwide differences in terms of race/ethnicity and family income. Selectivity in table 2.1 is carried out by students' university entrance exams (in this case the American College Testing—the ACT). Students must take either the ACT or SAT¹ in order to complete the application process. There is evidence of racial patterns of performance. In general, African American students score lower overall on the SAT score than their white counterparts (Santelices & Wilson, 2010). Highly selective universities accept students who score in the top 25%. Those institutions would fall under the description of 'elite universities'.² Universities that accept students in the top 50% are considered moderately selective.

¹ The SAT originally was the 'Scholastic Aptitude Test'; now it is simply the SAT.

² Elite universities in the UK are defined as Russell Group institutions. Ancient universities in Scotland are also included in the elite classification. In the US, Ivy League and top tier public research universities with highly selective (25% or less) admission rates are classified as elite.

Inclusive universities accept the top 75% of students. According to Digest of Education Statistics (Snyder & Dillow, 2013), those from ethnic minority communities (particularly African Americans and Hispanics) are much more likely to attend moderate-to-inclusive universities over highly selective ones. Regardless of the expansion of higher education, there exists a culture in which, ‘even though students from upper-class families make up less than one-twentieth of all students in the combined applicant pool, they account for nearly one-fifth (19%) of students who apply to three or more’ elite institutions (Espenshade & Radford, 2009, p. 66).

Table 2.1 Percentage of students who graduated from high school in 2002 attending higher education in 2006 by institution selectivity, race/ethnicity, and family income

| Characteristic | Four-year institutions | | | | Less than four-year institution | Non-enrollee or still enrolled in high school |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| | Highly selective | Moderately selective | Inclusive | Unknown selectivity | | |
| Total | 13% | 18.7% | 5% | 3.6% | 29.6% | 29.9% |
| Race/Ethnicity | | | | | | |
| White | 16.7 | 22.9 | 3.5 | 3.3 | 28.6 | 24.9 |
| Black | 4 | 13.3 | 12.2 | 3.2 | 29.3 | 37.7 |
| Hispanic | 4.6 | 8.9 | 3.8 | 5.1 | 35.7 | 41.5 |
| Asian | 28.5 | 18 | 4.4 | 3 | 27.4 | 17.7 |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 5.4 | 11.9 | 3.1 ³ | 3.0 | 27.7 | 49.9 |
| Family income | | | | | | |
| Less than \$20,000 | 3.2 | 10 | 4.7 | 2.9 | 31.1 | 47.7 |
| \$20,001-\$50,000 | 7.1 | 14.8 | 5.2 | 3.5 | 32.1 | 36.9 |
| \$50,001-\$100,000 | 15.7 | 23.5 | 5.2 | 4.4 | 29.3 | 21.8 |
| Greater than \$100,001 | 34.7 | 28 | 3.9 | 2.9 | 20.6 | 9.3 |

(Source: Steven *et al.*, 2010 (ELS: 2002/06)⁴).

³ Percentages for American Indian/Alaska Native attendance at inclusive universities or those of unknown selectivity have a large standard of error.

Although there are a variety of higher education institutions that provide additional student places, 39.6% of white high school graduates, and 62.7% of those from families earning greater than \$100,000 annually, attend high-to-moderately inclusive universities. These figures contrast with 17.3% of black, 13.5% of Hispanic, and 13.2% of those from families where household income is below \$20,000. The percentage differences suggest that, while expansion provided more student places overall, it has not necessarily translated into a system in which school leaver destination is not shaped by wealth or ethnicity.

2.1.2 Social characteristics of university students in England

The principal focus of widening participation policy in England tends to place most emphasis on working-class entry to elite universities (David, 2009). In total, there were 327,130 full-time university entrants in 2011-2012 and 80% of first-degree entrants were categorised as 'young' (entry at 18 years old). Of first-degree entrants, 88.5% attended state schools (Weedon, 2014). 579,125 (or 79.3% of UK-domiciled first-year students) considered themselves to be white (HEFCE, 2012a.). In England, the vast majority of first-year students in higher education self-reported as white, whereas only 1.8% of the first-year population identified as Black British Caribbean. Considering social class background, over the past decade there have been positive trends in university participation. Between 2003 and 2014, the proportion of working-class students attending university increased nearly by a fifth (from 20.9% to 24.7%) (Milburn *et al.*, 2015, p. 86). A joint report by the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) found, however, that children from poor backgrounds remain 'far less likely to go to university than more advantaged children, tend to attend lower-achieving secondary schools, and those who do attend university are more likely to attend lower-status institutions' (Chowdry *et al.*, 2008, p. 2). Table 2.2 highlights English entry rate percentages for those from the highest (5) and

⁴ An update was available in 2012; however, the data was classified as restricted and, therefore could only be released to higher education institutions or postdoctoral researchers.

lowest (1) quintiles. This table demonstrates a narrowing of the attendance gap between quintiles between 2010 and 2014; in 2014 those in quintile 5 were only 2.5 times more likely to attend higher education than their quintile 1 counterparts. Not displayed in this table, however, is that despite representing about 20% of young people, people from low participation areas make up only 11% of first-year, first degree population (Independent Commission on Fees, 2015, p. 13).

Table 2.2 Entry rate percentages of English 18-year-olds by POLAR2 quintiles, 2010-2014

| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Highest Participation Quintile (5) | 44.4% | 47.7% | 45.5% | 46.7% | 45.9% |
| Lowest Participation Quintile (1) | 13.9% | 15.1% | 15.5% | 16.9% | 18.2% |
| Q5:Q1 Ratio | 3.2 | 3.2 | 2.9 | 2.8 | 2.5 |

(Source: Independent Commission on Fees, 2015, p. 12).

2.1.3 Social characteristics of university students in Scotland

In 2011 just over a quarter (1.1 million) of people aged 16 years or over in Scotland held a first or higher degree, a professional qualification, or an equivalent higher education qualification (Scotland's Census, 2011). Individuals with higher socioeconomic status tended to attend more selective universities. For instance, 55% of independent school entrants attended an elite university, whereas only 25% of state school entrants did so (Riddell, 2015). While Scotland's university entry rate of 18-year-olds is the lowest in the UK, some young people (especially from poorer backgrounds) enter colleges prior to transferring to university for their final two years. This helps to explain the lower participation rates. Research conducted by Croxford and Raffe (2013) note that higher social class entrants tended to enter higher-status institutions, and this pattern has remained steady. Similar to the rest of the UK, in Scotland the principal focus of widening participation is on social class; however, part of widening participation in Scotland is to track those in the Black Minority Ethnic (BME) enrolment in further or higher education. The Scottish Funding Council

released the characteristics of Scottish-domiciled students attending higher education intuitions, and in 2013-14 only 6.4% of the population was from a minority ethnic group, whereas 93.6% of those enrolled were from a white ethnicity. According to Scotland's Census (2011), Glasgow had the largest minority ethnic population at 12%, cities of Edinburgh and Aberdeen had 8%, and 6% of Dundee's population was from a minority ethnic background. No data was given, however, on how many of these individuals would have been considered a traditional age to enter higher education. Considering only social deprivation, table 2.3 displays the proportion of Scottish-domiciled students at Scottish higher education intuitions from the 40% most deprived areas (SFC, 2015, p. 23). From the table it is clear that there is a participation gap relating to socioeconomic status from SIMD 20 (see chapter 5 for more detailed discussion of SIMD and POLAR). While there has been some movement from 2009 to 2013 in SIMD 20 (from 11.6% to 12.1%), movement is slow despite the policies and strategies to widen participation.

Table 2.3 Scottish-domiciled students attending HEIs by SIMD characteristic, 2009-2014

| Year | % from 20% most deprived | % from 40% most deprived |
|----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2009-10 | 11.6 | 27.2 |
| 2010-11 | 11.4 | 26.9 |
| 2011-12 | 11.5 | 26.9 |
| 2012-13 | 11.9 | 27.4 |
| 2013-14 | 12.1 | 27.5 |

(Source: SFC, 2015, p. 23).

Concern regarding issues of access to and underrepresentation in higher education is reflected in both quantitative and qualitative research on patterns of participation in higher education. Overall, in the US, the classification of 'underrepresented' is based on ethnic minority background and socioeconomic status, whereas in England and Scotland socioeconomic background is a main factor in underrepresentation. The next section will discuss the large-scale literature reviews of widening participation.

2.2 Reviews of widening participation literature

Widening participation research is diverse in terms of theoretical underpinning and methodological approach, and much of it is concerned with the larger effort to seek social justice in higher education. To Burke, widening participation

is a project of social justice by virtue of its underpinning aim. The emphasis on widening, rather than simply increasing, access to and participation in higher education places focus on those groups who have been traditionally excluded or under/misrepresented in higher education (2013, p. 109).

In the last ten years, there have been numerous reviews of widening participation policies and initiatives in the US and UK. Studies addressing participation in higher education have included working-class and minority ethnic students, student aspirations and achievement, and the student transition (Torgerson *et al.*, 2014; Moore, Sanders & Higham, 2013; Riddell *et al.*, 2013; Gorard, See, & Davies, 2012; Harvill *et al.*, 2012); the categorical definition of social class and the underrepresented student (Goldthorpe, 2010); and social and institutional barriers in higher education (See *et al.*, 2011; Torgerson *et al.*, 2008; Gorard *et al.*, 2006).

Gorard *et al.* (2006) reviewed the research examining the barriers that prevent inclusion in higher education, and argued that much of the research distinguished between situational barriers (direct or indirect cost, distance from institution, or a lack of time), institutional barriers (admission procedures), and dispositional barriers (individuals' motivations or learning attitudes). Overall, Gorard *et al.* (2006) concluded that there is slow movement towards 'equity' in the higher education sector, though most of the discussions at that time focused on the deficit areas. This results in Gorard *et al.* (2006) suggesting the need for a focus on areas such as transition and adjustment, rather than a focus that perpetuates the 'deficit perspective' (p. 56). Gorard *et al.* (2006) notes the tendency for teachers to perceive non-traditional students from a deficit perspective—assuming they enter education with some sort of 'deficit'. To overcome this way of thinking, Gorard *et al.*'s findings suggest that

institutional change is needed in order for underrepresented students support to become embedded in institutions.

Several more recent studies have reviewed literature since Gorard *et al.* in 2006 (Moore *et al.*, 2013; Riddell *et al.*, 2013; Gorard *et al.*, 2012). Much of the large-scale academic research is commissioned by the Departments of (and for) Education in each jurisdiction or by organisations working to widen participation such as Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), Office for Fair Access (OFFA), and Sutton Trust in the UK, or TRIO and the Pell Institute in the US. In their critical review of higher education aspiration and educational outcomes, Gorard *et al.* (2012), determined that the vast majority of widening participation literature was smaller in scale. Therefore, the large-scale reports featured below are crucial in providing an up-to-date synthesis of the widening participation literature in the US and UK.

Moore *et al.* (2013) led a study entitled *Literature review of research into widening participation to higher education* for HEFCE and OFFA on behalf of the Arc Network.⁵ Their review targeted research since Gorard *et al.* (2006) and was first commissioned by HEFCE. The report focused on nine different categories: outreach and progression; information, advice, and guidance (IAG); retention and student success; impact of financial support; flexible provision; progress to postgraduate study; employers; employability; economic growth and widening participation. Some of the widening participation material covered in their review centred on reports from Action on Access (Allen *et al.*, 2005), Aimhigher (see Moore *et al.*, 2013), National Foundation for Educational Research, Sutton Trust (Hoare & Mann, 2012), and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Gorard *et al.*, 2012). On the implications for policy and practice, they concluded that

the barriers may not primarily be about resources, but about priorities and culture (Moore *et al.*, 2013, p. 130).

⁵ The Arc Network refers to the Aimhigher Research and Consultancy Network.

Although they acknowledged that there are issues facing universities pertaining to how different groups are identified, they argued that clarity regarding student targeting would ensure the best use of resources. For example,

to make best use of resources, more intensive activities need a clear targeting strategy and whilst it is accepted that there are issues with how different groups should be defined and prioritised, higher education providers could aim to be clearer at the institutional level about their widening participation priorities (p. 133).

Moore *et al.* (2013) write that universities, particularly the more selective ones, have clarified their stance by targeting specific students who have the potential to succeed at their university and, therefore, have prioritised activities to include these targeted students. Although Moore *et al.* (2013) seems to support the targeting of students, issues that need to be explored more fully are the intended outcome of widening participation and whether targeting a small few should be considered widening participation. More specifically, is the aim of widening participation to raise aspirations of all students who traditionally would be excluded from higher education, or is it in fact designed to raise only the aspirations of a small few considered 'intellectually able'? It could be argued that by targeting a small group of students, elite universities are dividing students by perceived capabilities and further placing barriers in front of those they deem academically underachieving.

Looking at the complex issue of access, Torgerson *et al.* (2014) created a map of relevant US and UK literature of higher education access. They grouped their findings into several chapters, three of which explored literature of post-16, UK-based interventions, and narrative studies. In their post-16 chapter (which they refer to as tertiary education) they mention two studies, Harvill *et al.* (2012) and See *et al.* (2012). Harvill *et al.* (2012) conducted a quantitative study to evaluate twelve American middle- and high-school programmes that targeted students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. Several of the programmes identified in their study were federal programmes such as Gear Up and Upward Bound. They concluded that school-to-university pipeline programmes in the US

increased high school graduation and enrolment in higher education. In the UK, See *et al.* (2012) conducted a systematic review of intervention strategies designed to increase post-16 participation amongst students from BME backgrounds. They concluded that providing financial incentives and adult mentors improved outcomes and post-16 participation for BME students. One commonality between the two studies is that mentorship, whether in a pipeline programme or at school, improved student outcomes and increased underrepresented students' chances of attending higher education. Torgerson *et al.* (2014) also reviewed narrative studies that addressed US and UK interventions ranging from programmes (TRIO) (Cowan Pitre & Pitre, 2009; Pell Institute, 2009), to financial aid (Solis, 2011; Baker & Velez, 1996), to access initiatives (Pathways to College Network, 2014). All of these studies made recommendations for policy makers and school and higher education leaders. For instance, Cowan Pitre & Pitre (2009) reviewed a series of longitudinal studies and reported on the overall effectiveness of the TRIO programme in raising aspirations and widening participation. Two of the recommendations included expanding student support and pipeline programmes to increase participation and developing programmes to document their success in order to combat the larger social and cultural stereotypes that plague the widening participation effort. These recommendations by Cowan Pitre & Pitre (2009) fall in line with the others mentioned above.

Riddell *et al.* (2013) examined the literature concerning widening participation and structured their review based on Milburn's (2012) terms: get ready, get in, stay in, and move on. Their review examined initiatives put in place to help non-traditional students. Riddell *et al.* (2013) took issue with the metaphor of 'barriers' presented by Gorard *et al.* (2006) writing that 'barriers may suggest something that may be mechanically removed' (2013, p. 26). They support the argument made by Burke (2012), that by focusing on barriers (material and concrete issues) cultural practices of misrecognitions and exclusions are often overshadowed. In this thesis, however, barriers (or boundaries) are understood to be predominately social and cultural factors that affect student participation

and the ability to fit into an elite university. The next section will review large-scale research examining widening participation policy and present empirical and theoretical understandings of widening participation efforts by methodological approach.

2.3 Overview of quantitative literature

Research on higher education has included studies on the effects of globalisation and massification on higher education (David, 2009; Slaughter & Rhodes, 2004); the changing face of higher education through expansion (Humes, 2013; Wyness, 2010; Gallacher, 2006; Dill, 1997); education policies; growing diversity within higher education (Crozier *et al.*, 2008; Archer, 2007); and the experience of students. This section will focus first on quantitative studies that examined finance, higher education policy, and higher education expansion, and then turn much of the attention to social class and race.

Callender (2010), Callender (2009), and Dowd (2008) examine the financial barriers that underrepresented students face. For instance, Dowd (2008) reviewed US literature on university student debt. She found that

sociocultural perspectives on financial aid policy expand understanding of the nature of information barriers to college. Emerging case study research and a small number of studies ... increase attention to the cultural and socio-psychological context in which students grapple with the intricacies of financial aid (2008, p. 19).

Regarding tuition fees, generally there is a lack of empirical studies on the effects of varying types of financial support. Callender (2010) argued that the outcome of employing bursaries and financial grants for students as a policy initiative to widen participation has only recently been documented. It could be argued that these studies indicate that the often assumed financial barriers when discussing access to higher education need more exploration, particularly in the UK context as England continues to raise tuition fees while all three jurisdictions decrease their available bursaries and grants in lieu of loans.

In addition to large-scale studies of widening participation, research has also surveyed the impact of policy on (and the historical context behind) the widening participation agenda as well as the ideological context to policy. Burke (2013) reviews the neoliberal agendas of marketisation and choice, and their effects on policy. She argues that

universities must compete in the global market of higher education for 'world class' students, staff and resources. Inequalities of gender, class and race are assumed to be eradicated by the market of higher education, in which individual consumers exercise their 'choice' to participate in higher education or not (p. 110).

The capacity for individual choice in education is reflected in both US and UK research studies, and will be discussed in greater detail below. Neoliberal ideas held by New Labour supported widening participation because it was seen as not only beneficial for underrepresented individuals, but it also could positively affect the economy (Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003). In the US, Mumper (2003) examined the declining role of public higher education in promoting equal access to education. He argued that the neoliberal agenda of massification in America—combined with the overall decrease in the amount of financial support students receive—further constrained low-income, disadvantaged families. To Mumper, widening participation policy and the overall decrease of financial support are fundamentally competing agendas.

Several researchers have produced findings on the ideological context behind policy initiatives (Archer, 2007; Bibbings, 2006; Greenbank, 2006). Archer (2007) explores the issue of equality and diversity as they relate to the transformation of higher education and UK education policy. She argued that, within higher education policy, the diversity rhetoric of New Labour did not translate into 'equality' in higher education. In fact, Archer argues that widening participation is more of a 'tool for social control than social justice' (p. 635). Bibbings (2006) also focused on policy and practice relating to widening participation, coming to the bleak conclusion that very little progress has been made since the 1980s. Bibbings examined a Sutton Trust study of the legal

profession, and attributed this lack of progress to poverty as well as poor schools—both beyond the influence of higher education. Though, it could be argued that it is these barriers—along with the lack of an aggressive contextual admission policy—that perpetuate exclusion. Gallacher (2006) and Croxford and Raffe (2013) concluded that institutional stratification in Scotland is being maintained, and education policy has not had the intended consequence. It could be argued that the barriers that were supposed to be addressed by policy, such as massification and increasing institutional choice, in effect have continued to exclude those traditionally excluded, particularly at elite institutions.

American sociologists Shavit, Arum, and Gamoran (2007) compared and contrasted 15 different countries, and examined whether educational expansion has in fact reduced inequality. They divided the 15 countries by classification: diversified education systems (Israel, Sweden, South Korea, Taiwan, US), binary systems (France, Germany, Great Britain, The Netherlands, Russia, Switzerland), and unitary or other systems (Australia, The Czech Republic, and Italy). Overall, they concluded that there was persistent inequality across all 15 countries, but as the sector has expanded, all social classes have benefitted. Although each large study was driven by different research questions, all seemed to suggest that the neoliberal policies intended to help widen participation (through choice, marketisation, and expansion) have, in fact, failed to make much headway at elite universities. The conclusion, that as this sector has expanded the middle-class have benefitted, can be understood by what Boliver (2013) identifies as the ‘saturation point’. This phenomenon will be discussed in more depth in the next section, but it provides one explanation of how an expanding sector can still result in exclusionary practices.

Much of the research above suggests that exclusion is not just about economics and access to economic resources, although economic capital does improve outcomes (Savage, 2015). Quantitative studies are crucial for understanding patterns of participation, financial aid, and tuition fee lending. The studies

considered below have addressed participation in education in relation to social class and race.

2.3.1 Social class

Class as a concept has always been contested and difficult to define; it is used in many different ways for different purposes. For instance, class can be used (or defined) categorically (Goldthorpe, 2010; Paterson, 1992). The categorical determination of social class is based on economic resources, family circumstances (family size and number of offspring), parents' education levels, peer groups, and an individual's neighbourhood (Paterson, 1992, p. 12). Yet, social class is not just defined by an allocation of economic resources, but includes the cultural and capital competencies and values given to a specific individual (Anthias, 2001).

Sociologists use quantitative data to study issues ranging from inequalities in admission policies, to devolution in the higher education systems, to the effects of tuition fees on students. Regarding the expansion of higher education, Boliver (2013) used Universities and Colleges Admissions Services (UCAS) data to explore the effects of this expansion on the efforts to widen participation. Ultimately, she found that expansion increased the 'saturation' of middle-class students in elite universities, while those from social class backgrounds traditionally excluded from elite institutions saw their chances of accessing a prestigious university only slightly improve. Boliver's identification of saturation as a phenomenon implies that middle-class students have 'first pick' over which higher education institutions to attend. The expansion of higher education allowed middle-class students to select first, and only after 'saturation' are underrepresented individuals able to access highly selective institutions. This expansion, however, did not sufficiently eliminate participation inequality (Schuetze & Slowey, 2002; Boliver, 2013). So, despite expansion, inequalities in the higher education system were ultimately maintained (Boliver, 2013).

Similar to Boliver, Croxford *et al.* (2013) conducted a quantitative study looking at contextual admissions at an elite institution in Scotland. This contextual admissions policy was adopted in 2004 and allowed the university to collect more data on their applicants. Croxford *et al.* (2013) found that a 'mis-match'—identified by student record analysis—revealed a high proportion of students, identified as underrepresented through the use of postcode data, in fact came from a high social-class background (Croxford *et al.*, 2013, p. 12). Thus, some of the students admitted under the widening participation umbrella were not from backgrounds traditionally defined as widening participation, skewing the actual numbers of underrepresented students entering the elite institution. Students identified as 'widening participation' through the use of official measures such as SIMD (or POLAR in England) may not be from low-income backgrounds, but could live in an area identified as low-participation. The student, in fact could be middle-class. This mis-match is also apparent in the US where, due to Affirmative Action, some minority students are tagged as 'underrepresented' when, in fact, they may be from middle-class families. So, the manner in which students are identified is crucial to widening participation research.

Rising tuition fees in the UK and US have raised concern regarding access. The increase of tuition fees to £9,000 in England caused many policy-makers and academics to argue that this rise would greatly affect the participation of students from underrepresented backgrounds in terms of social class, but data published by Raffe and Croxford (2015) call into question whether tuition fees actually affect participation. The Scottish government has maintained opposition to charging Scottish-domiciled students tuition fees as one method to maintain an egalitarian education system. Again the data published by Raffe and Croxford (2015) reveal that, despite the lack of tuition fees, Scotland's elite institutions continue to admit fewer poor students than do newer universities. This suggests that in Scotland it was not simply fees that kept underrepresented students from participating in elite institutions. Iannelli (2011) examined social mobility as it relates to educational expansion in Scotland. She reviewed the trends in social class inequalities and found that, despite policy and an increase

in overall attainment, class differences in attainment persisted. This suggests, that notwithstanding the Scottish government's introducing policies to widen participation, the policies are not enough to change the systemic social barriers and patterns of exclusion driven by social class structures. In 2013, Croxford and Raffe traced student patterns and stratification of participation. They, too, found that higher social class entrants tended to enter higher-status institutions, and this pattern has remained steady.

The Independent Commission on Fees (ICoF) (2014) examined trends in higher education admission and enrollment in England. Although the intent was to examine the effect of tuition fees on participation, they discovered a participation gap based on family background. Students from advantaged backgrounds (based on POLAR2 quintiles) were 9.8 times more likely to apply to an elite university than were their disadvantaged peers. While much of the literature in the UK pertains to government policies, a lot of American studies focus on student participants and the incorporation of ethnic minorities and those from low socioeconomic status. For instance, Espenshade and Radford (2009) employed data from the National Study of the College Experience (NSCE), along with institutional data from 1983, 1993, 1997 and survey data, to address a series of questions. One question posed in the study (p. 2) was 'to what extent is American elite higher education involved in promoting social mobility' and in what way do they reinforce existing inequalities? They concluded that universities must do more to admit a more racially diverse class and attract students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Yet, attracting students in the admission process is just the start. They found that there are inequalities pertaining to social interactions, and that 'whites are more likely than any other ethnic group to interact exclusively' with other white individuals (p. 388). A substantial amount of qualitative data (see below) examines the student experience and campus climate, but little cultural change had taken place on university campuses.

Aries and Berman (2013) used a mixed-methods approach to examine

Affirmative Action and the student experience at an elite institution in the US. They found students' pre-university racial environments and experiences were a major indicator of their experiences of diversity. Additionally, the perceptions of a hostile racial climate have an adverse effect on minority students on campus. One of the themes that resulted from their study was that having a 'diverse study body' was essential to students' abilities to become global citizens, and yet universities need to take a more active role in developing a more inclusive campus climate. The studies of Espenshade and Radford (2009) and Aries and Berman (2013) address the need for elite American universities to take more responsibility in developing an inclusive campus climate. They argue that these universities need clearer mission and vision statements on student inclusion and need to implement more diverse modules into the curriculum.

The common thread amongst the studies above is that, despite policy, efforts to widen participation have stalled, and larger social and cultural barriers affecting participation persist. These barriers include middle-class dominance and saturation of universities, the mis-identification of underrepresented students, and university *habitus*.

2.3.2 Race

Unique to the US is the government programme Affirmative Action (see chapter 5). While it was designed to ensure all underrepresented groups had a place at higher education institutions, 'one of the largest recipients of Affirmative Action has been white women', not ethnic minorities (Leonardo, 2009, p. 133). The topics of admission through Affirmative Action policy and campus climate were very important to the Great Lakes University administrator (see chapter 5) and his ability to facilitate a sense of belonging at the university. At Great Lakes the two topics go hand-in-hand. Because Affirmative Action is a contested admission method (often involving a dominant white assumption that Affirmative Action favours lesser-qualified minority students over whites), the initiative affects not only how racial minority students are perceived on campus

but also the culture they enter. The understanding that whiteness is the 'unarticulated' normative structure by which all are measured is crucial to the widening participation debate (Apple, 1996). In a survey of 7,000 students across ten campuses, Rankin and Reason (2005) found that one third of students of colour reported experiencing harassment (compared to 22% of whites), and whites and students of colour experienced campus climate differently (with white students viewing it more favourably). For those 7,000 students, encountering racism was part of their experience; nevertheless, claims of reverse racism or white victimisation (e.g. denouncing Affirmative Action) discount the perpetuation of racial micro-aggression on university campuses and victimise the minority population twice (Cabrera, 2012). It can be argued that many working- and middle-class white students believe that there is a 'cost' to being white. This 'cost' could explain why ethnic minority students can experience a negative climate while attending university. To counter the belief that Affirmative Action places middle-class white students at a disadvantage, Espenshade and Chung (2005) examined admission data to determine whether in absence of Affirmative Action majority students would notice an increase in admission. They concluded that, even if Affirmative Action were removed from admission criteria, white students would notice little benefit. Espenshade and Chung did not test, however, whether removing Affirmative Action would change white students' perceptions of their minority peers.

Quantitative studies are crucial for understanding patterns and causal relationships (though they are not necessarily intended to create change or inform practice), whereas qualitative studies are vital for understanding the individual experience. The next section will review qualitative studies.

2.4 Overview of qualitative literature

As in the quantitative studies featured above, two of the central ideas that affect the individual student experience are social class and race. The discussions of

social class barriers in qualitative literature include class hierarchies, educational choice, transition, and the categorisation of the underrepresented student. Studies examining race explore issues of racial stereotypes, expectations, labels, and university *habitus*. These topics will organise the next section.

2.4.1 Social class

Social class has long been a central idea in widening participation literature. For example, Bourdieu (1973) argued that capitalist classes were able to reproduce their own social and cultural capital by maintaining control of participation in elite universities.

Because elite universities are beginning to include those traditionally excluded, students once receiving an exclusive middle-class privilege are in fear of ‘being assailed by intruders from below’ (Ball & Vincent, 2001, p. 184). Ball and Vincent (2001), and Preston (2007) each examined how class hierarchies are reflected in education. Ball and Vincent (2001) addressed the ways in which social and economic norms underpin class differentiation in education. They found that since education was being ‘transformed into an oligarchic good’, there was a defensive necessity on the part of the middle class to ‘preserve their families’ positional advantage’ (Ball & Vincent, 2001, pp. 184-5). The reproduction of power also reflects class hierarchies in education, and is apparent through parental selection and educational choice (Reay, David, & Ball, 2005; Ball, 2003; Echols & Wilms, 1997). The concepts of choice and how barriers, hierarchies, and belonging affect choice are heavily researched (Bradley & Ingram, 2013; Voigt, 2007; Ball, 2006; Bridges, 2006; Reay *et al.*, 2005; Ball, 2003; Ball *et al.*, 2002; Reay *et al.*, 2001; Ball & Vincent, 2001). Bridges (2006) analysed different constraints on choice. He tied identity to the limiting of options—choice is limited by an individual’s perceptions of the barriers they face as a result of their social status. Thus, claiming a person actually has a choice in every aspect fails to acknowledge the social constraints and expectations (or lack thereof) projected onto them. This suggests that social

class, race, and gender all perpetuate inequalities of choice. Furthermore, choice is limited by an individual's own perception of self and belonging—the stronger our identity the more limited we become (Bridges, 2006). One of the tenets of the neoliberal argument of choice (established in both the US and the UK) is that choice decreases inequality. Yet, according to Bridges' (2006) research, relying on choice alone to decrease inequality fails to acknowledge other unseen educational constraints. One of those constraints, in addition to choice, is hierarchy within the higher education system.

Ball *et al.* (2002) used a mixed-methods approach to examine student choice in the UK. Choice, they explained, is embedded in different biographies, institutional *habitus*, and different opportunity structures. This suggests that perception and social class position drive higher education institution selection—the selection embodying social structures. Reay has also led multiple studies looking at student choice. For instance, Reay *et al.* (2005) interviewed working-class students ages 16-19, and found that

choice for a majority involved either was a process of finding out what you cannot have, what is not open for negotiation, and then looking at the few options left, or a process of self-exclusion (p. 85).

Overall, they determined that the widening participation agenda is unable to address the underrepresentation of specific groups in higher education. Specifically, they found that ethnicity alone does not determine one's choice of institution; rather, a combination of family, social class, social and cultural capitals, financial factors, and other factors together influence choice. Additionally, they identified two types of students: the *contingent chooser* and the *embedded chooser*, the *contingent* being typically a first-generation applicant whose parents were educated outside the UK, whereas *embedded* as defined a student whose parents attended university—most likely in the UK—and attendance was an expected and established route (Reay *et al.*, 2005, p. 119). Choice in all these studies implies that although there might be options for the individual, choice is socially embedded and an expression of an individual's

identity. As a result, both social class and race affect an individual's perception of choices available.

Finally, Ecclestone, Biesta, and Hughes (2010) emphasised that choice must be understood while considering the boundaries and hierarchies within which an individual is located. Their book features a series of articles engaging with the sociological dilemma of structure versus agency pertaining to lifelong learning, learner identity, and educational choice. They conclude that the act of being a student is not just a process of academic transition, but an identity transition. Ultimately, Ecclestone *et al.* (2010) suggested that student difficulties in transition are connected to difficulties in balancing their 'old' way of life with university life. Therefore, greater distance (social and cultural) between their background and the university *habitus* suggests more tension and difficulty in fitting in. This research is helpful in understanding the underrepresented student experience at elite institutions, as often there is a culture clash between the student's background and the university *habitus*.

The transition of students into higher education has received a lot of attention. Much of the literature has focused on the first year of study, though researchers like Tobolowsky (2008) and Christie *et al.* (2016) are beginning to shift their gaze beyond the first year. Although the methods vary, much of the research examines social class or race to explain student efforts to fit in. Drawing attention to the changing face of students on university campuses, some work has been devoted to exploring the classification of underrepresented students as 'day', 'new', or 'atypical' students. An individual who travels from home to university each day to help with finances is defined as a 'day' student. Several studies explore how underrepresented, adult students experience higher education (Leese, 2010; Christie, 2009; Buote *et al.*, 2007; Christie, Munro, & Wager, 2005). Leese (2010) conducted a mix-methods study to consider whether there is a new classification of student participating in higher education, and found a correlation between cultural capital and *habitus* in the construction of the new student. Most of the students classified as 'new' (or

underrepresented) were employed during term, and, therefore, could not participate in university activities. One of the findings Leese explores is the student desire for universities to create more structured activities to help with the adjustment process. The finding suggested by Leese (2010) is similar to a finding Christie (2009) had suggested. Christie found that 'day' students often see their university experience fitting in with the daily 9-to-5 rhythm, which comes in stark contrast to the all-consuming immersion that most first-year students experience. Examining just Scotland, Christie *et al.* (2005) found an increasing tendency for mature students to live at home. This resulted in students rejecting the 'normative ideals' constructed by the middle-class, traditional student. Furthermore, due to the 9-to-5 nature of their university experience, 'day students' are less open to making new university friends, particularly since the majority of their social life still takes place outside the confines of the university. University, therefore, no longer represented a place to experience 'life changing event[s]', but rather an extension of their worlds (Christie *et al.*, 2005). Christie *et al.*'s (2005) understanding of the mature student experience was important when considering the experiences of three Antonine University participants in this thesis. The differences Christie *et al.* (2005) explored also provide insight into some of the institutional barriers that continue to affect non-traditional adult students.

In her 2006 study, Holdsworth observed the decision some students make to live at home during their undergraduate education, and how their residential status affects their ability to take part in 'traditional' university experiences. She investigated the perception of the 'typical' student who spends their academic career drinking, socialising, and taking part in politics, while falling into debt or not worrying about finances. It can be argued that this pattern is in stark contrast to the experience of non-traditional students or individuals who decide to live at home. Buote *et al.*'s (2007) Canadian study examined adjustment and the development of friendship groups at university. They determine that there is a positive correlation between developing new friendship groups and adjustment to university. So, for students who commute, friendships from home

are more likely to stay intact, and the need to form new strong bonds is not as immediately necessary. Yet, by failing to forge new university friendships, students may struggle in their adjustment. Taken together, the studies surveyed above suggest that despite government policy, hierarchies in higher education persist, and that one's ability (or opportunity) to make choice is socially embedded.

2.4.2 Race

The qualitative empirical data presented in this thesis take multiple positions on race, marginalisation, and the reproduction of power in America. This is due to the types of issues the Great Lakes participants mentioned during their interviews: racial stereotypes, student perceptions, and university climate. To situate race and higher education, the social implications must be briefly addressed. Minorities rarely possess power, and, as a result, *whiteness* becomes less about skin and more about reproduction of power (Butler, 1993; Johnson-Ahorlu, 2012). This reproduction is demonstrated through policies, policing, economic opportunities, and residential and educational segregation. Leonardo (2009) employed critical theory to understand the nature of oppression. He found that oppression was simultaneously social and lived. Because much of the social rhetoric in the US was geared towards the individual, racism was presumed to be an individual experience based on individual attitudes. But, defining racism as purely individual and a result of individual attitudes fails to acknowledge the persistent link between academic achievement and the racial hierarchy of society (Leonardo, 2009). Sociologists studying oppression have identified stereotypical ideas of students of colour, some of which are expressed in this thesis: violence, belonging, sexualisation, masking feelings, and racial assumptions. Psychologists Gaertner and Dovidio (1986) believe that racism has undergone change from overt public acts to that which is underground and *aversive*. These acts of micro-aggression greatly affect not only the student experience but also the *habitus* at predominately white universities.

In their study of the student experience, Harper and Quaye (2009) defined campus climate as something seemingly intangible—a perceived philosophy of how others treat marginalised students on university grounds. As universities begin including the language of race and class in their strategic frameworks, how these issues are addressed (whether the institution is perceived as reactive or proactive) has an enormous impact on the overall campus climate. Johnson-Ahorlu (2012), Rankin and Reason (2005), Brown (2004), and Hurtado (1992) all investigated how racial inequalities along with a racially charged campus climate together affect the academic lives of underrepresented students. Most large, liberal, and progressive universities outside the American South believe that, due to their political views and liberalism, racism was not present at their university. So, if a university does not experience an overt, public outburst of racism, then white students and administrators generally believe they have achieved an inclusive campus climate.

Aries and Berman (2013) explored racism at an elite American university. The perception of black people as threatening was a lingering stereotype that had a negative effect on the student experience. They observed that white students labelled black males as violent, confrontational, rowdy, and scary, the white students believing themselves as incapable of those levels of violence. Black males experienced these stereotypes through everyday interaction with their peers—e.g. witnessing their white peers crossing the street to avoid them. Reay's (2002b) exploration of masculine peer pressure on educational achievement also involved masculine stereotypes often centred on race (e.g. athletic ability, violence, and sexuality) and how stereotypes can lead to different educational barriers and outcomes for male students, particularly those of minority status. Mercer and Julien (1995) and James (2009) also examined racial and gender stereotypes. Mercer and Julien describe the codes and objectified ways of 'framing' black males. One finding of their study is that black men need to fit into the stereotypes that white men set up for them; however, often these stereotypes are hyper-sexualized. For instance, when dealing with sports magazines, black males are pictured as the 'sexual savage'

who reflects the 'public projection of certain erotic fantasies about the black male body' (Mercer & Julien, 1995, p. 188). The cultural idolisation of black men in sport can perpetuate the stereotype into other areas, such as education. This stereotype, they found, led teachers to push black students into sport when these students underperform academically. Therefore, sport became a realm black men can occupy, thus sending the message that school is not 'their' realm. Nonetheless, these labels go deeper as they contribute to how black males (among others) form their identities in relation to others, for often ethnic minorities substitute their language, dress, and disposition to fit with the dominant group (Preece, 2009). Substitution (or performance) is a very important concept in relation to chapters 7 and 8 below.

Edwards and Jones (2009) conducted a small qualitative study in the US, interviewing ten male undergraduate students about their identity and higher education. The men felt higher education (as well as American society) had narrow and rigid expectations regarding who initially they could be, and yet the expectations of maleness increased in complexity over time. As a response to the external expectations, the males put on (performance) masks to be considered men. The participants suggested their struggle to take off the masks only subsided once they had begun to understand their identity and reconcile social expectations with their own sense of self. Reay (2002b) studied a white, working-class male student to understand how class, race, and social structures impede on one individual's academic success. Her study differed from Edwards and Jones' (2009) in a variety of ways, though both concluded that social boundaries and structures limited the male students. The research of Allen (2013) combined identity and hierarchy when he investigated black, middle-class males in higher education. The black males used their middle-class backgrounds to 'culture-straddle' by performing different set behaviours and attitudes, and enable fitting-in. Despite the social and cultural capital they acquired due to their middle-class standing, race and gender played a large part in how they were perceived. In fact, due to the racist notions of their teachers, peers, and institution, if they behaved in a manner affirming typical stereotypes

of black male behaviour, they could be relabelled from schoolboys to trouble makers. Any resistance to education, however, stemmed from a willingness to camouflage academic effort to fit in with their peers (Allen, 2013).

Similar to the studies conducted by Mercer and Julien (1995) and James (2009), Martino (1999) considered masculinity and race to be determinants of educational behaviour. One result was that being smart was considered 'cool' for females, but for males to be 'cool' they must reject schooling (or at least not be seen partaking in any study or school-related activities). Overall, it was sport and masculine ideals that joined males together, not academic achievement.

James (2009) authored a Canadian article about masculinisation and racialisation in schooling. He discussed the labelling of black boys in education as 'trouble makers', 'bad boys', or 'underachievers'. These labels create a dynamic to which these boys must conform in front of their peers, that conformity perpetuating the cycle of labels leading to actions. Each of these conclusions about black males and the stereotype of violence are about more than just education. Harper and Nichols (2008) examined variability amongst black males on university campuses in relation to dress, language, and neighbourhood, finding immense variability. Furthermore, they addressed social assumptions that stem from racial stereotypes. For instance, the variations among skin tone within the minority community affect an individual's sense of belonging. Likewise, the topic of *good* hair within the minority community serves to perpetuate the in/out discourse and shame those who do not fit in. Quinn and Pawasarat (2014) reported that in 2013 the Department of Corrections' records revealed that incarceration rates for African Americans men were at epidemic levels in the state where Great Lakes University exists—nearly half of African American men between the ages of 30 and 44 had spent time in gaol or were currently incarcerated. This suggests that labelling and the culture of fear directed at minorities not only contribute to underperformance and exclusion in education, but also have wider social repercussions.

In combination, the empirical, quantitative, and qualitative literature on race and social class point to a systemic devaluation and exclusion of individuals outside the dominant norms. To gain a deeper understanding of inequality, central constructs of capital, race, and identity will be reviewed.

2.5 Central constructs in widening participation: social class, race, and identity

There are three central constructs that need defining when understanding the barriers faced by underrepresented students in higher education. The following sections review Bourdieu's concept of capital, critical race theory and performance, and identity.

2.5.1 Social class and forms of capital: the reproduction of social inequalities through higher education

Since the 1960s, Bourdieu and other theorists have moved away from explaining social stratification as resulting purely from economic capital, and have introduced alternative forms of capital to explain social class hierarchies and the reproduction of power. Bourdieu's research on capital has included many forms (social, cultural, linguistic, and symbolic), and understands capital as something that can be exchanged for social value, but that value is often determined by the dominant group to reproduce hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1986). Many scholars have argued that Bourdieu's definition of social capital was underdeveloped and, therefore, had significant holes (Field, 2005; Blaxter & Hughes, 2000). Despite concerns about Bourdieu exaggerating the reach of the middle class, he is cited extensively and in some regards has become the backbone of much research on education and social class.

Bourdieu's primary interest involved how social advantage and disadvantage are maintained by middle- and upper-class desires to preserve power and control (Bourdieu, 1986). Thus, Bourdieu created a binary between those who

reproduce their power positions (through the acquisition of capital) and those less powerful. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) argue, therefore, that the middle class does not value the capital of individuals from low socioeconomic groups. Bourdieu used social capital as a way to describe resources to which individuals have access due to their belonging to families, groups, or associations (Smith, 2000). For Bourdieu, social capital is the product resulting from investment (time and energy) in social relationships. Further, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) discussed social capital as resources or networks that people use and maintain to secure their own advantage (Field, 2005). According to Bourdieu, social capital is connected to both economic and cultural capital.

Bourdieu (1993) defines cultural capital as a 'form of knowledge, an internalized code or a cognitive acquisition which equips the social agent with empathy towards, appreciation for or competence in deciphering cultural relations and cultural artefacts' (p. 7). Cultural capital is ultimately linked to class, transmitted from parents to children, and contains three 'states': embodied, objectified, and institutionalised. The embodied state refers to heredity, the passing of capital that begins at birth from the parents. Everyone in the family, however, has different amounts of capital (Bourdieu, 1993). The objectified state refers to cultured goods—for instance books, musical instruments, or paintings—that can be appropriated both materially and symbolically (but to possess something one first needs financial or economic capital) (Bourdieu, 1986). Finally, the institutionalised state represents the amount of social capital possessed by an individual. This third state depends not only on the size of their networks but also on how quickly those networks can be mobilised. The clubs and organisations that individuals join have 'clout'; an individual invests to be part of the club, and in turn they agree to uphold the rules of the club (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 89). Although everyone has some form of cultural capital, the lack of legitimated forms of cultural capital causes working-class groups to self-exclude from university, struggle with educational exams, or encounter difficulty with the culture of the university application process (Burke, 2012). Bourdieu explored how the middle and upper classes 'called on'

their material and non-material goods to secure and even advance their interests, and how (and whether) parents transmitted their capital to their offspring (Bourdieu, 1977). Cultural capital is conditioned and embedded in an individual's actions, dispositions, knowledge, language, thinking, feeling, and ultimately their being. These embedded characteristics are what Bourdieu refers to as *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 59; Jæger, 2011; Reay, 2004).

2.5.2 *The concept of habitus*

Bourdieu (1990) applied the term *habitus* to move beyond the binary nature of objectivism and subjectivism, and to integrate both into a single sociological understanding. *Habitus* is understood by Bourdieu (1990) as a set of dispositions acquired at an early age, and provides one way to explain an individual's fit or sense of belonging in higher education as *habitus* relates to the mechanisms through which choices are made (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Overall, *habitus* is located within social and cultural understandings of social class. *Habitus* not only structures, but also is structured by a space. As a result, it provides one explanation of university campus climate (or university culture). Although *habitus* is often applied to include social groups, it can also be a means to understand individual practice (Bourdieu, 1990). An individual acquires a significant part of their *habitus* through the family, though this aspect, it could be argued, has a profound effect on how individuals structure their educational experiences (Thomas, 2002). Since acquisition is dependent on an individual's family background, it can be a means to understand individual practices. To some extent Bourdieu's use of *habitus* indicates elements of determinism; however, according to work by Reay (2004), individuals have the freedom to behave in a variety of ways, and yet their *habitus* predisposes them to behave in specific ways. Institutional *habitus* is understood as how a cultural group or social class position affects an individual's behaviour, though their behaviour is mediated by the organisation to which they belong (Thomas, 2002). Notions of individual and institutional *habitus*, therefore, should be considered together.

Many social scientists have used the idea of capital as a means to understand the mechanisms that affect life chances and social mobility (Schultz, 1961; Portes, 1998; Lin, 2000; Li, Savage, & Warde, 2008). According to Loury, Modood, & Teles, 'each individual is socially situated, and one's location within the network of social affiliations substantially affects one's access to various resources' (2005, p. 582). The theory of inequality in social capital is based on two principles: one, inequality of social capital occurs when particular groups cluster at disadvantaged socio-economic positions; and two, people tend to stay close to their own socioeconomic backgrounds (Lin, 2000, p. 786). Taking the principles beyond economics; ethnicity, gender, employment status, and education all contribute to the inability to be socially mobile (Haüberer, 2011, p. 133).

Bourdieu's work, although flawed in regards to social reproduction,⁶ is helpful when thinking about the reproduction of power and exclusion in higher education. Bourdieu's understanding of social capital suggests that the forms of capital working-class students possess and can access are devalued by elite higher education institutions. Bourdieu raises questions regarding the ingrained nature of power and the reproduction of control in higher education. This type of ingrained power is also reflected in critical race theory.

2.5.3 Critical race theory and performance

There are a variety of perspectives from which race theory is discussed. Three in particular are critical race and critical social theories, and Butler's performance. To explain racial hierarchies, sociologists since 1995 (particularly in America) have applied critical race theory to education as a means to explain exclusion (Chadderton, 2013). The theory suggests that racism is deeply engrained in contemporary American culture due to a history of racism, and is therefore considered normative. Furthermore, it expresses doubt regarding

⁶ Bourdieu's work on social reproduction has received objections, from Savage, for instance, who argues that the invisible functionalism that results in the endless reproduction of power for the middle-class fails to acknowledge fully the importance of cultural capital in social stratification.

claims of colour-blindness, meritocracy, and objectivity (Ladson-Billings, 1998). As Matsuda (1993) explained, critical race theory seeks to eliminate racial oppression with the broader goal of ending all social forms of oppression. While Bourdieu engages with hierarchies in a structural way, critical race theory similarly describes the reproduction of dominance and power but goes a step further by engaging with the nature of oppression. Nevertheless, due to policies geared to widen participation, some feel that individuals traditionally underrepresented in higher education are unfairly advantaged in the admission process, and have declared that Americans live in a post-racial society (Leonardo, 2009). Discussing colour-blindness, Butler (2015) noted that

of course there are white people who may be very convinced that they are not racist, but that does not necessarily mean that they have examined, or worked through, how whiteness organizes their lives, values, the institutions they support, how they are implicated in ways of talking, seeing, and doing that constantly and tacitly discriminate (p. 8).

Since white, middle-class students have traditionally dominated higher education institutions, the argument is that universities fail to notice how whiteness and middle-class values organise everything from a university's strategic plan to the modules offered. Butler, known for her work on gender, applies her identity theory to race. One connection she explores is *performance*: race and gender identity as something we 'do' not who we 'are' (Butler, 1993, 2010). Butler's theory has similarities with that of role identity, and observes that performance can be either an unconscious or conscious effort to conform or rebel. This thesis does not go as far as Butler by arguing that all aspects of racial identity are fluid, but it does support the understanding that perceived racial identity affects how individuals view themselves and where they are placed in social hierarchies.

2.5.4 Sociological review of identity

Identity is an important tool for understanding the student experience in higher education. By incorporating identity, research can move beyond static understandings of class, race, and gender to understand their embodied

interconnection. Identity is taken to mean different things. Often identity refers to an individual's 'core identity'; the understanding that individuals have a unique trajectory, their own narrative, and discourses that form this narrative are historically located (Gee, 2000-01). Identity in this thesis does not incorporate ideas of core identity, but rather uses the multiple identities a person embodies as a result of acting or interacting as a 'certain kind of person' (Gee, 2000-01). Said another way, identity is socially constructed through complex and varied interactions between different forms of capital, social and economic conditions, human interaction, and cognitive development (Ecclestone, *et al.*, 2010; De Reyter & Conroy, 2002). An account of individual agency (the capacity for action or choice) must endeavour to include factors that contribute to or limit choice. Factors include social boundaries and hierarchies or limitations imposed on individuals in the form of class, race, and gender. This section introduces three positions within identity formation literature: modernism, postmodernism, and the incorporation of both structure and agency. This thesis reflects the third position by considering the sociological dilemma of agency (the capacity or freedom for action or choice) versus structure (social or cultural determinations of class, race, and gender).

The educational ideals of school choice and fitting in are consistently reflected in the empirical literature mentioned above. And yet, both are constrained by the barriers that exist in society. For instance, Willis's (1977) study on working-class 'lads' exhibited the qualitative accounts of oppositional practices (agency) and the introduction of cultural reproduction used by theorists like Bourdieu. There is a dichotomy here, not just within the sociological dilemma, but also in how theorists interpret identity formation and the effect identity has on how individuals experience the world around them. For instance, Bourdieu represented a modernist viewpoint by arguing that individuals are bound to the *habitus* of class and gender (Bourdieu, 1977, 1987, 1990). In this context, it can be argued that modernity produces difference and therefore social exclusion. More specifically, modern institutions, like higher education, create the

possibility for emancipation while simultaneously creating boundaries of suppression (Giddens, 1991, p. 6).

Mentioned in the previous section is the sociological dilemma of identity: structure versus agency. Examples of researchers who support agency include Lash and Urry (2002), Beck (1992), Butler (1993, 2010). Lash and Urry (2002) described a new phase of global capitalism in which more emphasis was placed on the fragmentation of social, cultural, and economic systems, rather than increasing coherence. This fragmentation reflects a postmodern culture. By shifting manufacturing to countries considered Third World, First World countries could focus on the development of a service class. These changes to capitalism ultimately fragmented working-class collective identity, placed a stronger influence on mass media, and disrupted the conceptualisations of time and space in everyday life (Lash & Urry, 2002).

Giddens (1991) represents the possibility of regarding identity as influenced by both social structures and individual agency. Giddens (1991) focused on the self and self-identity that are shaped by, and also shape, the modern institutions. He incorporated notions of risk along with those of trust and fate. This viewpoint allows for the theoretical perspective of intersectionality that 'critically examines how intersecting systems of inequality shape individuals' lived experiences, and result in intersectional rather than additive social identities' (Jones & Abes, 2013, p. 131). Intersectional work is about identity. Generally, the goal of using an intersectional approach is to dismantle the structural boundaries and inequalities that exist in everyday life (Jones & Abes, 2013), of which, higher education is one. More specifically, Dill, McLaughlin, and Nieves (2007) and Luft (2009) argued that each individual possesses multiple identities not only because of the complexity of who they are as individuals, but also due to the complex multidimensional ways each individual lives their life.

Addressed in the last section by Butler, *role identity* implies a duality of both external and internal purposes, 'role' meaning the external 'social position within the social structure' as opposed to the internal expectations associated

with the role (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 289). These roles are embedded and provide context for the expectations (associated with that role) and regulations (by the group). The combination of individuals fulfilling and regulating their own and their peers' roles establishes group dynamics and serves the interest of the collective. While sometimes the varied roles held by an individual can complement each other, often they conflict (Wiley, 1991; White & Burke, 1987). This conflict was evident in White and Burke's (1987) work that explored ethnic role-identity among black and white students, and how roles dramatically differed between the dominant (white) and minority (black) students. Either conflict or competition is created when roles and identity mis-match (Stryker & Burke, 2000). The mis-match of role identity was expressed more simply when relating to higher education as the study of student choice, the student transition, and fitting in. This understanding of role offers insight into the internal reasons students select specific institutions and how they perceive themselves to fit. Hussey and Smith (2010), Jackson (2003), and Edwards and Jones (2009) use role identity and mis-match when exploring students' use of masks or becoming chameleons to fit into the dominate culture structure of an elite institution. Essentially the mis-match created a need for a *performance self* to lessen the stigma associated with being part of the minority group.

The study of identity includes factors of race, ethnicity, and social class, and in the process acknowledges difference. Goffman argued in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1990b) that identity was a performance—a projected act where individuals are either unaware of their projections that are authentic or aware and project an inauthentic self. Identity performance is a central theme of chapters 8 and 9 of this thesis as many of the participants indicated changing their clothing or accents, wearing a mask, or being a chameleon to fit into their universities and families. One of the central themes of Goffman's work is that performances are idealised with the intent to conform to cultural norms and avoid becoming the Other (1990b). Clarke argues in *Culture and Identity* that the relationship between Goffman's three senses of identity provides a constructionist view of how self and identity are 'constructed and maintained in

parallel with societal norms' (2008, p. 513). Clarke (2008) works to combine Goffman, Foucault, Mead, and Freud with the intent to introduce the psychosocial element of race and the cultural identity that is associated most strongly with the Other. To Clarke, race stems from the premise that society is split into multiple human races—the idea that bio-endowment and physical features have a relationship with cultural superiority. He wrote with the understanding that racism persists in society and has caused belief that our political/cultural systems are superior (us vs. them), an increase in genuine fear that those who are Other cause problems for the dominant society, and the idea that it is natural for people to live with their own kind (fuelling debate about where people belong) (2008, p. 520). Finally, he argued that cultural identity is socially and psychologically constructed, consequently infusing identity with passion and emotion.

The work on identity offers some insight into how people produce and reproduce their identities, and, furthermore, how narratives of difference shape an individual's educational experience. Since this thesis explores the underrepresented student experience and the ability to fit into an elite university; identity and the extent to which an individual has educational choice are crucial issues. This thesis does not choose a side in the sociological dilemma of structure or agency. Findings from the literature above and in this research project suggest that social class identity is more easily changed by accent, and dress. Race and racial identity, however, is less easy to alter. Put another way, social structures apply more strongly to more easily visible attributes like race than they do to slightly less visible issues like social class; the corollary similarly holds, that agency is more easily exercised when visibility of social difference is minimised.

2.6 Conclusion

A review of the literature reveals ongoing debates concerning the efforts to widen participation to university, and the variety of compounding barriers

students face, whether within their family backgrounds, efforts to transition, funding of higher education, or ability to fit or belong at an elite institution. Policy discourses aimed at widening participation (see chapter 5) often frame students traditionally excluded from higher education as failing due to a lack of motivation or aspiration (Archer & Leathwood, 2003). Yet, it is clear from the literature presented here that individuals are ‘shaped by a myriad of influences, and continually reform [their] subjectivities through [their] actions and engagements with others’ (Reed, 1999, p. 104). Thus, there is diversity in both the needs and educational aspirations of each student. An important theme in the literature is the multiplicity and the interconnection of factors that affect not only a student’s ability to attend an elite institution but also their experience once *in situ*. Although focusing on barriers can lead to focusing on material (and therefore moveable) issues, the use of barriers can also imply the deeper, cultural practices that are entrenched and ultimately lead to the exclusion of underrepresented groups in higher education and perpetuate inequality of minority peoples.

Social hierarchies reproduced as academic hierarchies fulfil the perpetuation of social order (Bourdieu, 1973). Indeed, Bourdieu states that ‘the educational system reproduces all the more perfectly the structure of the distribution of cultural capital among the classes’ (Bourdieu, 1973, p. 493). Historically, there is little doubt that ‘highly structured and hierarchic systems of education have been established’ in the Western world and predominately in Western Europe and the US (Simon, 2005, p. 146). During the nineteenth century the ‘classification of a population involved the moralisation of space, with classes being zoned into specific locations and special boundaries acting as social markers’ (Savage, Bagnall & Longhurt, 2005, p. 95). Yet, this was true long before. During the sixteenth century, one’s place in society was reflected in church pew seating—the proximity to the pulpit correlated with acceptance and power in the community (Marsh, 2005). Moreover, it can be argued that these boundaries still exist as ghettos, council housing, the projects, and unspoken neighbourhood divisions; moreover, the boundaries extend to the creation of

community colleges and, to some extent, the multiple tracks in primary and secondary schooling.

Race is a defining element of an individual's life (Apple, 1996). Race, itself, is a socially constructed concept used to explain how the dominant social group uses difference in an effort to maintain power and control (Apple, 2004). But, it could be argued that race is not a stable concept. Race (and its definition) in this thesis is not biological or something that can be measured precisely. Race reflects a set of social relations that are historically, culturally, economically, and socially situated. Higher education, in the US in particular, is a place where racial difference is played out—as those from ethnic minorities were traditionally excluded. The push to widen participation has brought these differences to the forefront of the student experience. This is reflected in the fact that, despite government policies to widen participation, the reproduction of white, middle-class dominance and racial and socioeconomic segregation in education persists—as white, middle-class students are more likely to attend prestigious universities, whereas underrepresented students are more likely to attend community colleges or post-1992 institutions (Moore *et al.*, 2013; Modood, 2006).

Chapter 3: The cost of higher education in the US, England, and Scotland

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews financial aspects of higher education. It will introduce the differences in the overall cost of attendance in the US, England, and Scotland, the financial aid structure in each jurisdiction, and specific financial measures put in place to support underrepresented students. The increase in the number of students entering higher education on both sides of the Atlantic has not been met with university funding increases that are proportional. This has resulted in increasing tuition fees (ranging from the relatively unregulated system in the US, to free tuition for Scottish-domiciled students), decreasing grants and bursaries offered to low-income students, and replacing grants with loans. Each jurisdiction has selected its own path regarding financial support for students. To accommodate the increasing numbers of students, there has been a shift in England regarding who assumes the debt burden of higher education taxpayer to individual. In the US, the burden of paying fees has largely belonged to the individual and the state. Prior to 1998, the English taxpayer assumed all of the tuition costs of higher education. Since then, Westminster has introduced tuition fees to pass some of the debt onto the individual. In Scotland the taxpayer continues to support higher education more fully. The cost of attending university is often named as one of the structural barriers to higher education. This chapter presents a review of the literature which suggests that while tuition fees and the cost of attending university present some very real financial difficulties to underrepresented students, they are not the sole barrier to higher education. Once enrolled, however, the cost associated with university does directly affect poorer students' ability to take part in co-curricular activities disproportionately more than their middle- or upper-class peers. Additionally, despite the availability of grants, scholarships, and bursaries, widening

participation students often take on proportionately more long-term debt, and take longer to repay their loans than their middle-class peers. This chapter first examines the cost of higher education, then the structures of financial aid that help students cover the cost or organise their repayments. The last section addresses specific financial support for underrepresented students.

3.2 Costs of attending university

There are substantial differences in tuition fees, maintenance fees, and levels of financial support between the US, England, and Scotland. Since the US has done little to regulate tuition fees, costs amongst institutions can differ by as much as \$30,000 depending on the type of institution (table 3.1). In England, elite universities can charge up to £9,000, and students must factor in additional estimated maintenance costs. The National Union of Students estimated approximately £10,133 for course costs and an additional £12,056 for maintenance (including rent, food, insurance, and some for social activities) (National Union of Students, 2010). For Scottish-domiciled students studying in Scotland, tuition is free, but again must factor in accommodation costs of anywhere between £5,000 to more than £12,000. Although grants and scholarships provide some financial relief, they rarely cover all of a students tuition fees and rarely cover living costs.

3.2.1 Costs associated with US universities—US domiciled

The costs of Midwestern institutions, of which Great Lakes is one, (ranging from community colleges, to private, to public universities) are shown in table 3.1. Overall, educational costs are just as stratified as the institutions accepting the fees. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) recorded the average dollar amount for undergraduate tuition fees and accommodation to be \$14,300 at public institutions and \$37,800 at private institutions nationwide (Snyder & Dillow, 2013). NCES determined that between 2001 and 2012 the cost of attending public universities in America increased by 40%, while that at private

universities rose by 28%. Table 3.1 shows the national average cost of tuition fees and accommodation between 2010 and 2013 at two- and four-year, public and private institutions.

Some students in the US elect to attend two-year community colleges for the first two years of their undergraduate degrees in order to fulfil the breadth of their coursework at a more affordable price (see chapter 5). The numbers in table 3.1 demonstrate why. For students attending their own state's public universities, enrolling for the first two years at a community college could save an average student \$10,000 in tuition fees. The average in-state tuition fee for a four-year public university in 2012/13 was \$15,639 (£11,850). For the comparable two-year institution, the cost was \$4,109. When maintenance costs are included, the same public four-year institution costs \$21,683 (£16,430), whereas a private, non-profit, four-year institution would cost upwards of \$42,962 (£32,555).

Table 3.1 Average annual fees (in USD) for first-time, full-time undergraduates

| Level of institution, living arrangement, and component of student costs | 2010-11 | | | | 2011-12 | | | | 2012-13 | | | |
|--|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------|----------------|
| | All institu- tions | Public, in-state | Private | | All institu- tions | Public, in-state | Private | | All institu- tions | Public, in-state | Private | |
| | | | Non- profit | For- profit | | | Non- profit | For- profit | | | Non- profit | For- profit |
| 4-year institutions | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Average total cost, by living arrangement | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| On campus | 27,435 | 20,114 | 39,772 | 30,130 | 28,739 | 20,997 | 41,418 | 30,840 | 29,408 | 21,683 | 42,962 | 30,187 |
| Off campus, living with family | 19,940 | 12,561 | 31,630 | 20,226 | 20,989 | 13,328 | 32,939 | 22,595 | 21,272 | 13,648 | 34,136 | 21,902 |
| Off campus, not living with family | 29,390 | 21,665 | 40,148 | 29,114 | 29,736 | 22,364 | 41,582 | 30,121 | 29,818 | 22,763 | 42,516 | 28,774 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Component of student costs | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tuition and required fees | 14,551 | 7,249 | 26,769 | 14,236 | 15,359 | 7,731 | 27,949 | 15,643 | 15,639 | 8,005 | 29,115 | 14,914 |
| Books and supplies | 1,134 | 1,194 | 1,217 | 799 | 1,245 | 1,232 | 1,238 | 1,416 | 1,250 | 1,243 | 1,243 | 1,393 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| Level of institution, living arrangement, and component of student costs | 2010-11 | | | | 2011-12 | | | | 2012-13 | | | |
|--|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| | All institu- tions | Public, in-state | Private | | All institu- tions | Public, in-state | Private | | All institu- tions | Public, in- state | Private | |
| | | | Non- profit | For- profit | | | Non- profit | For- profit | | | Non- profit | For- profit |
| 2-year institutions | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Average total cost, by living arrangement | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| On campus | \$15,267 | 12,398 | 24,654 | 29,587 | 14,383 | 12,823 | 26,840 | 27,713 | 14,608 | 13,277 | 27,478 | 28,246 |
| Off campus, living with family | 10,451 | 7,933 | 17,334 | 21,143 | 9,421 | 8,150 | 20,324 | 19,692 | 9,385 | 8,339 | 19,921 | 20,086 |
| Off campus, not living with family | 17,934 | 15,278 | 25,773 | 28,805 | 16,882 | 15,526 | 29,301 | 27,362 | 16,980 | 15,896 | 28,647 | 27,591 |
| Component of student costs | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tuition and required fees | 5,230 | 2,794 | 12,839 | 15,373 | 4,222 | 2,970 | 14,335 | 14,343 | 4,109 | 3,080 | 14,496 | 14,511 |
| Books and supplies | 1,324 | 1,292 | 1,276 | 1,514 | 1,314 | 1,314 | 1,413 | 1,301 | 1,339 | 1,341 | 1,373 | 1,300 |

(Source: Digest of Education Statistics, 2013, Table 330.40)

3.2.2 Costs associated with English universities—UK domiciled

The financial system in England is a bit more straightforward than in the US. Providing uncertainty, however, is the allocation of bursaries for low-income students. The decision to raise fees in 2003 also created new regulations for grants, bursaries, and loans. In 2006, when variable tuition was capped at £3,000 per year, the *Higher Education Act* included a stipulation that those universities charging the maximum amount (£2,700 to £3,000) must provide low-income students with a £300 bursary to cover the higher fee (Callender, 2010). This system exposed the systemic inequality behind the distribution of widening participation students across the higher education system. Specifically,

one Russell Group university reported that fewer than one in ten of its students was eligible for a full government grant and the minimum mandatory bursary, compared to nearly a third at a Million+ university. Consequently, the first university could retain more of its tuition fee revenue income, which it could spend on its non-mandatory bursaries and scholarships on other services (Callender, 2010, p. 58).

Now in 2016, with basic tuition set at £6,000, almost 90% of English institutions charge £9,000 for at least some of their courses. The assumption that only Russell Group universities would charge maximum tuition fees no longer holds. Many Post-1992 universities, such as London Metropolitan University, are charging £9,000 for some courses in 2014-15. Although there was an initial assumption by policy makers that only certain universities would only charge the maximum in exceptional circumstances, pressure to cut costs, maximise income, and remain competitive has meant that nearly all universities irrespective of tier have increased fees.

3.2.3 Costs associated with Scottish universities—Scottish domiciled

The Scottish Government has agreed to subsidise tuition fees for Scottish-domiciled students studying in Scotland. As a result, Scottish-domiciled students are not responsible for their tuition fees. A major issue facing Scotland is the

sustainability of this policy. Although universities are receiving some money from the Scottish Government, the lack of tuition revenue from Scottish-domiciled students had to be addressed. In September 2011, the *Scottish Spending Review* made two announcements. First, Scottish institutions would charge the rest of the UK (rUK) students £9,000 to attend their institutions. Second, to narrow the funding gap, both an efficiency savings (totalling £26 million annually across the sector) and a £327 million cash uplift (in government funding) were introduced to ensure Scottish universities remained competitive (Jennings, 2013, p. 165). This investment signalled Scotland's long-term expectation to remain a state-supported higher education system. Although many Post-1992 institutions rely on the Scottish Funding Council for funding, elite universities rely less on the Council's funding due to their high proportions of fee paying students (such as rUK, overseas, and postgraduate students), research grants, and private donations (see chapter 5 for an in-depth discussion of the Scottish Funding Council).

Despite this investment, Scottish students still incur significant costs. The rationale was that a lack of tuition fees would eliminate access barriers, but according to Blackburn (2014), 'even in absence of tuition fees, levels of final debt for low-income Scottish students who study in Scotland are comparable with and in certain cases higher than debt levels for similar students from other devolved administrations' (p. 1). For families earning between £17,000 and £34,000 annually, the Scottish government ranks second amongst the four UK nations in its level of funding support (Blackburn, 2014). For instance, those with a family income of £17,000 or less will receive £7,500 per academic year in loans and bursaries (in England the equivalent is £6,052; see details in tables 3.4 and 3.5) (Blackburn, 2014). Though by 2014 that number decreased to £7,250. On the other hand, support for living costs for families earning £34,000 to £44,000 is the lowest in the UK, as these families are just over the income bracket to receive aid. Yet, students from those families still struggle to receive a financial package that allows them to leave higher education without significant debt. While there are no tuition fees in Scotland, 'free tuition' does not mean a

more meritocratic education system. Students from low-income backgrounds are increasingly forced to rely on loans to support their living costs (Blackburn, 2014). Due to this reliance, low-income students are proportionately incurring more debt as bursaries and grants become less available. Additionally, there is a general lack of funding for those enrolled in further education. Since this is the route into university for many widening participation students, poorer students feel the lack of financial support more deeply than students from wealthier households.

3.3 Financial aid in the US, England, and Scotland

This section introduces the funding structures, the government offices overseeing the distribution of financial aid, and the allocation of financial support in all three jurisdictions. There have always been fees associated with higher education attendance. The issue, however, is whether the state (through the taxpayer), the individual, or a combination of both pays these fees. Tuition fees in the US have always been a responsibility of both the individual and the state. Prior to 1998, the UK government covered all tuition fees. In 1998, the UK broke with wider European tradition and allocated the payment of tuition fees to the individual (see chapter 5). Between 1998 and 2011 England has twice raised its cap on tuition fees. In contrast, despite economic pressure to compensate for the loss of potential tuition fee income, the Scottish Government selected not to implement tuition fees for Scottish-domiciled students in Scotland.

3.3.1 US funding structure

The American funding structure is composed of three levels of support: federal, state, and institutional. The Department of Education oversees the federal aid system; its mission is to implement federal law. Founded in 1867, the Department of Education was designed to govern all levels of education including the policies and financial regulations passed by lawmakers. At the

helm is the Secretary of Education, who reports directly to the President of the United States regarding the educational plans, programmes, and policies of the federal government (US State Department).

The Federal Aid Program is an office within the Department of Education and provides more than \$150 billion in grants, work-study funds, and loans (Federal Student Aid, 2015b). Authorised under *Title IV* of the *Higher Education Act of 1965* (discussed in chapter 5), the Federal Aid Program processes over 22 million applications annually and distributes money to over 6,200 colleges, universities, and vocational schools (US DoE, 2014). The Department of Education acknowledges that while its role in funding education is small, it aims to target funds ‘where it can do the most good’ (US State Department). Providing grants, work-study,¹ and student loans is one of the largest roles the federal government plays in education. This financial support reaches over 15 million students each year (US DoE, 2014). Although funding oversight is primarily a job for the individual states, the Department of Education reports that \$1.15 trillion is spent nationwide on education each year. A substantial majority of that money, however, comes from state, local, and private sources (US State Department). Table 3.2 exhibits the most recently published percentages of undergraduates receiving some type of aid. Column 1 in table 3.2 illustrates the total percentage of undergraduates receiving any form of aid. Columns 2 to 5 demonstrate the types of federal aid and the percentage of that aid received by undergraduate students. The last three columns represent the non-federal (state, institutional, private) aid that students can receive.

Federal aid has gone through a series of changes since 1965, with several reauthorisations of the *Higher Education Act* in 1972, 1978, and 2011 (Hossler & Kwon, 2015). While US student loans remain means-tested, the *Middle Income Student Assistance Act* of 1978 removed income eligibility from the student loan

¹ Work-study assists students earn funding through part-time work. The federal government supplies funding directly to the institution. This funding allows the institutions to subsidize part-time work opportunities.

programmes, allowing all full-time students to take out a government loan (Mumper, 2003). Central to the government's financial aid system was the Pell Grant—originally introduced in *Title IV* in 1965 and first named the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant in 1972. These policies provided the grant for not only low-income students but also 1.5 million students from middle-income backgrounds. In 1980 the Basic Grant was renamed the Pell Grant due to the sponsorship of a Rhode Island Senator, Claiborne Pell.

Nearly all of the US states have a financial support programme that is means-tested, but these schemes vary by state. In their overview of American financial aid programmes, Allen *et al.* explain that 'today 80% of the total volume of state financial aid comes from five states: Illinois, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and California', suggesting that access to state financial support is 'dependent on where [students] live' (2005, p. 9). These differences in aid are largely connected to politics, history, and state population. For instance, a state like Wyoming is comparatively rural and arguably has less economic need for university graduates; therefore, the state allocates less money to supporting higher education.

Table 3.2 Percentages of undergraduates receiving aid in 2011-2012 by sex, ethnicity, age, and attendance

| Characteristics | (1) Total aid received | (2) Federal aid | (3) Federal grants | (4) Federal loans | (5) Work study | (6) Non- federal aid | (7) Non- federal grants | (8) Non- federal loans |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Total undergraduates | 70.7 | 59.4 | 41.5 | 40.3 | 5.9 | 40.4 | 36.3 | 6.5 |
| Sex | | | | | | | | |
| Male | 68.4 | 56.7 | 36.7 | 37.3 | 6.0 | 39.8 | 35.6 | 6.4 |
| Female | 72.5 | 61.5 | 45.1 | 42.6 | 5.9 | 40.9 | 36.7 | 6.5 |
| Race/ethnicity | | | | | | | | |
| White | 68.1 | 55.3 | 33.7 | 40.2 | 6.0 | 40.0 | 35.9 | 6.8 |
| Black | 80.1 | 75.2 | 62.1 | 51.0 | 5.1 | 36.8 | 32.2 | 6.5 |
| Hispanic | 72.3 | 61.9 | 50.1 | 34.2 | 5.3 | 43.0 | 38.9 | 5.6 |
| Asian | 60.8 | 46.3 | 33.4 | 27.0 | 9.0 | 44.2 | 41.2 | 5.0 |
| American Indian/ Alaska Native | 76.3 | 69.0 | 55.3 | 41.9 | 4.7 | 40.9 | 37.6 | 5.1 |
| Two or more races | 74.8 | 63.6 | 45.7 | 44.1 | 7.2 | 46.7 | 41.9 | 8.4 |
| Age | | | | | | | | |
| 15-23 | 72.1 | 59.2 | 38.0 | 41.1 | 9.0 | 48.2 | 44.4 | 7.4 |
| 24-29 | 70.4 | 61.9 | 49.1 | 39.9 | 2.4 | 31.8 | 27.1 | 5.8 |
| 30 and above | 67.9 | 58.2 | 43.7 | 39.1 | 2.6 | 29.5 | 25.0 | 4.9 |
| Attendance | | | | | | | | |
| Full-time | 84.4 | 72.8 | 47.4 | 55.5 | 11.9 | 56.9 | 52.6 | 9.2 |
| Part-time | 62.1 | 51.1 | 37.8 | 30.9 | 2.2 | 30.1 | 26.1 | 4.8 |

(Source: Digest of Education Statistics, 2013 (table 331.10))

The last level of support is institutional as judgements pertaining to a student's financial need can also be made at this level. Some institutions can discount their tuition up to 30% in order to attract particular students (Allen *et al.*, 2005). A student's need is calculated by subtracting the family's expected contribution (the amount of out-of-pocket costs the family or individual would be expected to contribute), the financial aid office at the student's institution puts together a financial package made up of federal grants, bursaries, work-study, loans, and institutional grants (or any combination). As demonstrated in table 3.2, over 70% of students accept such financial aid packages. The other 30%, however, pay their tuition fees outright.

3.3.2 Types of funding in the US

Almost three-quarters of the student population rely on government and state grants, work-study, and loans in order to attend higher education. Unable to pay the upfront cost, students apply for loans to fund their tuition and maintenance fees. Table 3.2 compares these three types of federal aid. Federal grants support both low-income students through the Pell as well as veterans (and their children) through the Department of Defense Benefits or the Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant. Depending on an individual's (or family's) income and veteran status, they may be eligible for federal grants that cover university tuition, books, and at least some living costs (depending on need). Grants awarded from individual states, non-profit organisations, and colleges/universities are considered non-federal (see column 7 in table 3.2), though these are less common routes to receive funding.

A second avenue of support is work-study (see table 3.3). Work-study provides part-time institutional employment to students (undergraduate and postgraduate) who demonstrate financial need. The amount of hours an individual is allowed to work depends on financial need, but that individual can never exceed forty hours per week (full-time) (Federal Student Aid, 2015b). Additionally, those from underrepresented ethnic communities receive federal aid and grants at a higher proportion than their white counterparts. Those from

Asian backgrounds represent an exception, however, as they tend to receive less federal aid but far more work-study. While work-study benefits students, it also greatly benefits universities due to the fact that the federal government subsidizes work-study.

The third avenue of financial support is loans. Student loans available through the federal government are the Federal Perkins loan, Direct Subsidized/Unsubsidized loans, and the Parental or Direct PLUS loans (see table 3.3). The classifications within the different types of loans available are complex and differ based on type of student (undergraduate/postgraduate, part-time/full-time), interest rates, and the overall amount of money available. In short, subsidized loans are available only to undergraduates and do not accrue interest while the student is enrolled at least part-time in higher education. On the other hand, unsubsidized loans are available for both undergraduate and postgraduate students, but accrue interest on a daily basis for the life of the loan. It is preferable, therefore, to receive subsidized loans as one ends up paying less interest over time. Additionally, the PLUS loan is either for postgraduate or professional degrees or for parents of dependent undergraduates. While in the UK loans are awarded to the student directly, in the US parents of dependent children can apply for loans on their child's behalf due to their children having a lack of financial credit.

Table 3.3 Types of federal student aid: grants, work-study, and loans

Grants

| Programme | Eligibility and programme details | Award amounts⁸ |
|---|---|---|
| Federal Pell Grant | For undergraduates with financial need who have not earned bachelor's or professional degrees; a student can receive a Pell Grant for no more than 12 semesters or the equivalent (roughly six years). | Up to \$5,730 |
| Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) | For undergraduates with exceptional financial need; Pell Grant recipients take priority; funds depend on availability at university. | Up to \$4,000 |
| Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant | For undergraduate and postgraduate students who plan to become teachers; recipient must sign Agreement to Serve stating he or she will teach full-time in a high-need field for four complete academic years and serve children from low-income families. | Up to \$4,000 |
| Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant | For students who are not Pell-eligible, whose parent or guardian died as a result of military service in Iraq or Afghanistan after the events of 9/11; and who, at the time of the parent's or guardian's death, were less than 24 years old or were enrolled at least part-time at an institution of higher education. | Up to \$5,311.71 for grants first disbursed on or after Oct. 1, 2014, and before Oct. 1, 2015 |

Work-Study

| | | |
|--------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Federal Work-Study | For undergraduate and postgraduate students; jobs can be on campus or off campus; students are paid at least federal minimum wage; funds depend on availability at university. | No annual minimum or maximum amounts |
|--------------------|--|--------------------------------------|

⁸ Amounts awarded to a student can change year to year.

Loans

| | | |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Federal Perkins Loans | For undergraduate and postgraduate students with exceptional financial need; must be repaid to school that made the loan; 5% interest rate. | Undergraduate students: up to \$5,500 Postgraduate and professional students: up to \$8,000 |
| Direct Subsidized Loans | For undergraduate students who have financial need; U.S. Department of Education pays interest while borrower is at university and during grace and deferment periods; student must be at least half time; 4.66% interest rate for loans first disbursed on or after July 1, 2014, and before July 1, 2015. | Up to \$5,500 |
| Direct Unsubsidized Loans | For undergraduate and postgraduate students; borrower is responsible for all interest; student must be at least half-time; financial need is not required; 4.66% (undergraduate) and 6.21% (graduate or professional) interest rates for loans first disbursed on or after July 1, 2014, and before July 1, 2015. | Up to \$20,500 (less any subsidized amount received for the same period) |
| Direct PLUS Loans | For parents of dependent undergraduate students and for postgraduate or professional students; borrower is responsible for all interest; student must be enrolled at least half time; financial need is not required; 7.21% interest rate for loans first disbursed on or after July 1, 2014, and before July 1, 2015. | Maximum amount is cost of attendance minus any other financial aid student receives |

(Source: US Department of Education (US DoE), 2014)

Finally, the Perkins loan is a university-based loan for undergraduates or postgraduates with extreme financial need. Similar to the Pell in that it targets the same demographic, it provides emergency loan money in times of extenuating circumstances. Repayment is not made to the government but rather to the institution (university) that provided the emergency loan. Of course, a student's financial aid package can be made up of a combination of these different types of loans.

Important to note, however, is the variation of interest rates. Subsidized and unsubsidized loans for undergraduates carry the lowest rate of 4.66%, whereas the Perkins is 5%. The PLUS loan and the unsubsidized loans for postgraduates are between 6.21% and 7.21%. Furthermore, lenders such as banks, credit unions, state agencies, or universities can provide non-federal loans (Federal Student Aid, 2015b). Non-federal loans represent 6.5% of the total loans taken to pay for higher education (see Column 8 of table 3.2).

Much separates the US and UK regarding financial aid (see table 3.6). One example of this difference is the American model of *need-based* aid. When determining grant and loan amounts to be awarded, the overall cost of the institution (including tuition and living fees) and the expected parental contribution (based on US income taxes) are calculated to determine the total (and type) of student aid awarded. This calculation creates a system wherein not everyone is eligible for loans that cover all educational costs, nor does every individual receive the same amount. Put simply, loans, grants, and scholarships are not equally distributed to all applicants. To qualify for any type of federal aid, one must fulfil the following criteria: have completed high school or have a General Education Development certificate (GED), be enrolled in higher education, register with the Selective Service (National Military) for those between 18 and 25 years old, have a valid social security card, and complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) certification statement

claiming that they are currently not in default and will use the federal aid only for educational purposes (US DoE, 2014). Only when a student has completed each of those steps will they be allowed to complete a federal student aid application. As indicated above, parental income tax information (for dependents) determines how much the household can contribute towards higher education attendance. The household contribution is subtracted from the cost of attendance leaving the amount of loans, grants, and scholarships the Federal government is willing to provide to each student. Since tax information (from the prior year) is submitted just once each academic year, any changes to a family's financial situation cannot be remedied until the next academic year. This practice can have profound effects on a student's ability to support themselves (Johnstone, 2003). Further compounding the application process is that some parents from low-income backgrounds are resistant to submit their tax information, or they do not feel their economic earnings are their child's business. So, some students are not provided with the information necessary to complete the federal application. These situations, and more pertaining to how student finance affects the overall experience will be explored in chapter 6.

3.3.3 English Funding Structure

As tuition fees were recently introduced, funding to cover tuition fees is also relatively new across the UK, but a system of grants and loans was previously in place to cover students' maintenance fees. Established in 2009 as a result of a merger between the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR), the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) administers all student grants, bursaries, and loans. The Student Loans Company (SLC) is a non-profit government-owned body acting as an agent on behalf of BIS to manage the loans.

In 1998 the Labour Government introduced capped tuition fees of up to £1,000 across the UK. Several years later, the *Higher Education Act of 2004* further shifted responsibility of tuition fees from solely the taxpayer to a cost-shared

approach. Additionally, universities were able to charge a wide array of fees for an undergraduate degree (David, 2012, p. 25). Because of this fee increase, the government created the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) to ensure tuition fees did not exclude underrepresented students from university (see chapter 5). The old financial system operated a mortgage-style repayment plan, yet in 2004 the income-contingent system was introduced. By 2010 tuition fees had increased to approximately £3,290. In 2010, the Browne Review was commissioned to examine widening participation in relation to student finance with the remit to provide a report prior to the 2010 elections (Jennings, 2013). The report was not completed in time, but it recommended the abolition of England's £3,290 fee cap altogether. Because this review set no upper limits on tuition, it was seen by some as a move to marketise the English higher education system (Jennings, 2013).

In 2010, the Government (at that time a Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition) set the fee cap at £9,000, the second trebling in less than a decade. Following this increase, in June 2011 the government circulated *Putting Students at the Heart of Higher Education* (otherwise known as the *2011 Higher Education White Paper*). This document signalled changes to the Higher Education Funding Council for England's (HEFCE) role in widening participation. Although the new policy withdrew teaching grants for some undergraduate courses, income lost was regained by allowing institutions to increase their tuition fees from £3,290 to £9,000 per year (Heller & Callender, 2013). The *White Paper* indicated that the government would reduce 'the block grant money that universities and colleges' would receive from HEFCE, and it increased the maximum fees loans students could borrow from the government to £9,000, though 'the precise amount they borrow will depend on how much their university or college decides to charge in graduate contribution, any waivers or discounts it offers, and the decisions of students themselves on how much they want to borrow' (BIS, 2011b, p. 15). Those in households earning £25,000 or less annually (who attended a university charging over £6,000 tuition) could apply for financial support under the National Scholarship

Programme (Heller & Callender, 2013). The Programme awarded scholarships worth £3,000 (for first-year students only), and universities matched the allocation by 100% (Heller & Callender, 2013). By increasing fees, the government hoped to generate £3 billion in savings annually by 2014-15. Despite the fee increase, institutions are obligated to offer bursaries funded through tuition fees. This obligation is reflected and specified in university-written access agreements submitted to the Office for Fair Access. For those who entered higher education in 2012 (the first cohort to be charged £9,000), the Institute for Fiscal Studies estimated their average debt on graduation at £44,000 (Bolton, 2016). This is compared to the £25,000 average prior to 2012.

3.3.4 Types of funding in England

For those unable to pay tuition fees outright, the UK government set up three types of funding: tuition fee loans, maintenance loans, and maintenance grants. As in the US, the government pays the tuition fee loan directly to the university, and while the student agrees to accept the loan, they never see it in a tangible way as it is transferred directly to the university. Unlike the US, however, the amount of tuition fee loans received are not means-tested, so anyone, regardless of their socioeconomic status can apply and receive the full £9,000 tuition loan. Both the maintenance loan and grant (if the individual qualifies) are paid directly to the student to cover up-front costs such as accommodation and living expenses. The tuition loans and maintenance grants are administered based on household income. Students from families earning less than £25,000 annually are entitled to approximately £3,387 by way of a maintenance grant. Table 3.4 explains the maintenance support packages available to undergraduates by income. It is important to note that part-time and postgraduate students were not eligible for loans. From 1 August 2016, Masters students can apply to the Student Loans Company to receive up to £10,000 tuition fee support for their courses. In addition, the government announced that by April 2018 maintenance loans would be available for students who study part time.

Payments on the tuition fee and maintenance loans are deferred until graduation and do not commence until the graduate earns above £21,000 annually (Parry *et al.*, 2012). Students borrow the money from the Student Loans Company, and the company is responsible for calculating repayment that is income-contingent. The loans do accrue interest at approximately 3% plus the retail price index (i.e. inflation). The amount repaid is 9% of income earned above £21,000, thus higher earners pay back more quickly. If after 30 years, the loan has not been paid back in full, the remainder is written off. There is some concern pertaining to how many borrowers will actually pay off their loans in their entirety. The National Audit Office (2013) estimates that about 50% of new student borrowers will not fully repay their loans. If this calculation is correct, this will have serious effects on the financial aid system in England, and the rest of the UK, as responsibility for these payments will return to the taxpayers.

Table 3.4 Maintenance support packages for undergraduates in England, 2015/16*

| Household income | Support package 2015/16 | | |
|------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|--------|
| | Non-repayable maintenance grants | Maintenance loans | Total |
| £25,000 or less | £3,387 | £4,047 | £7,434 |
| £30,000 | £2,441 | £4,520 | £6,961 |
| £35,000 | £1,494 | £4,993 | £6,487 |
| £40,000 | £547 | £5,467 | £6,014 |
| £45,000 | £0 | £5,519 | £5,519 |
| £50,000 | £0 | £4,998 | £4,998 |
| £55,000 | £0 | £4,476 | £4,476 |
| £60,000 | £0 | £3,955 | £3,955 |
| £62,500 or more | £0 | £3,731 | £3,731 |

*For students living away from home and studying outside London.

(Source: Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS), 2014)

3.3.5 Scottish funding structure

Although the structure of education in Scotland has always been distinct from England, political devolution represented one of the key markers in Scottish higher education policy. It symbolised the continual divergence between the two countries, particularly in relation to the implementation of tuition fees.

Even at the start of formal devolution, policies enacted in Westminster and Holyrood affected students across the UK differently. As discussed in the preceding section, in 1998 the Labour Government introduced tuition fees of £1,000 per year. After 1999 there was significant pressure to eliminate student fees. A panel was organised and steered by Sir Andrew Cubie to investigate alternatives in Scotland. Cubie's solution was an endowment scheme, in which the government would front the fees on behalf of the student, therefore deferring an individual's payment until the graduate reached an income of over £25,000 (Newell, 2008). The Scottish government agreed in principle to the report, but decided to lower the threshold income to £10,000 and alter the repayment to £2,000 (£1,000 shy of Cubie's recommendation) (Riddell *et al.*, 2013). Despite this agreement, the UK government's introduction of the 2003 *White Paper*, which raised fees to £3,000, forced Scotland to re-evaluate its fee policy. This time Scotland decided to end deferment at graduation, and repayment would begin when the graduate's income level reached £15,000 (Riddell *et al.*, 2013). The establishment of an endowment benefitted those from underrepresented backgrounds as funds from the endowment were distributed into bursaries for underrepresented students. Those from poorer backgrounds and disabled students were exempt from contributing (Riddell *et al.*, 2013). Although the Scottish Funding Council provides some funding support to higher education institutions in Scotland by supporting colleges' and universities' teaching, research, and general costs (such as staff, infrastructure, buildings, and equipment) totalling £1.3 billion per annum, universities must supplement additional costs through tuition fees, research grants, and donations (Newell, 2008). The Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS), an agency of the Scottish government, administers financial support for Scottish-domiciled students. In 2013-14 Student Awards Agency for Scotland supported over 160,385 students (137,295 full-time, 14,870 part-time) with over £808 million in funding. Altogether the total is around £5,040 on average per student (SAAS, 2015).

3.3.6 Types of funding in Scotland

There are no tuition fees directly payable by Scottish-domiciled students attending a Scottish institution, but a student must apply to SAAS to request their fees be paid on their behalf. Scottish students studying in the rest of the UK (rUK) are not exempt from tuition fees and are responsible for paying up to £9,000. To cover maintenance costs, individual institutions offer bursaries and loans (up to £4,750) depending on financial need. Table 3.5 details the maintenance support packages (by income) offered to undergraduate Scottish-domiciled students. It is important to note that for the poorest students, the non-repayable grants offered by England are more generous (£25,000 or less receives £3,387 whereas in Scotland under £17,000 receives £1,750) than those offered by the Scottish Government. An argument can be made that this difference is due to Scotland's not charging Scottish students tuition fees. Yet, with maintenance costs estimated anywhere from £6,000 to more than £12,000, the majority of costs will be supported by loans.

Table 3.5 Maintenance support packages for (dependent) undergraduates in Scotland, 2015/16

| Support package for dependent undergraduates | | | |
|--|---------|--------|--------|
| Household income | Bursary | Loan | Total |
| £16,999 or less | £1,750 | £5,500 | £7,250 |
| £17,000-23,999 | £1,000 | £5,500 | £6,500 |
| £24,000-33,999 | £500 | £5,500 | £6,000 |
| £34,000 or more | £0 | £4,500 | £4,500 |

(Source: SAAS, 2015)

Non-repayable grants available to students from poorer backgrounds have been reduced and placed by repayable loans. Additionally, several grants are available for those from poor backgrounds (see table 3.6). Repayment on the loans does not commence until the April following graduation from university. An individual would be expected to pay 9% of their income once they earn over £17,335 (SAAS, 2015).

Table 3.6 Types of grants available to Scottish-domiciled students

| Programme | Eligibility and programme Details | Award amounts¹ |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| Dependents' Grant | For husband, wife, civil partner, or other adult dependent | Up to £2,640 |
| Lone Parents' Grant | For single, widowed, divorced, separated, dissolved civil partnership households | Up to £1,305 |
| Vacationers' Grant | For those previously in care | Up to £105 per week |
| Disabled Student Allowance | For those with a disability or learning difficulty | Extra expenses that arise due to course enrolment |

(Source: SAAS, 2015)

Table 3.7 Comparison of higher education financial aid structures in the US, England, and Scotland

| Higher education financial aid structures in US, England, and Scotland | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| | US | England | Scotland |
| Tuition fees | Unlimited | Up to £9,000 | Free for Scottish Domicile or European Union student; £9,000 elsewhere in UK or non-EU |
| Loan for tuition | Direct Subsidized and Unsubsidized Loans, Pell Grant, Perkins Loans, Service Grant & state, university, private loans/grants | Tuition Fee Loan | Tuition Fee Loan for non-Scottish or those attending university elsewhere in UK |
| Loans for living cost | Subsidized and Unsubsidized Federal Loans | Maintenance Grants & Loans | Maintenance Grant & Loans; £7,500 guaranteed for low-income students |
| Who is eligible | US Citizens who have: high school or GED completion, enrolled in HE, registered with Selective Service, valid social security card, and completed the FAFSA certification statement stating that they are currently not in default | UK-domiciled students | UK-domiciled students; some EU students (if certain conditions are met) |
| Servicer of loans | US Department of Education issues; third party lenders service loans | BIS owned Student Loans Company (SLC) | HESS Budget, administered by SAAS and overseen by SLC |
| Repayment details | 6 months after graduation; payments may be graduated, fixed, or increased (bi-annually) depending on who serving the loan ⁹ | Begins at £21,000, forgiven after 30 years, 9% of income | Begins at £17,335, forgiven after 35 years; 9% of income |

(Source: National Association for Student Financial Aid Administrators)

⁹ See table 3.8 for full repayment options.

Many differences exist between the US and UK funding structures and types of aid available. Table 3.7 offers comparisons across the three nations. Ultimately, these differences in funding have a large impact on overall tuition costs and how students are financially supported. Further differences exist in the repayment details. Because there are currently six different repayment options for American borrowers, table 3.8 provides a more in depth overview of US repayment details featured at the bottom of table 3.7.

Table 3.8 Repayment options in the US

Repayment details based on eligibility and loan amounts

| Repayment details | Eligibility | Advantage | Example of monthly payments |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Standard 10-year repayment | All borrowers of federal student loans | Borrower will pay off loan sooner and will pay least interest | \$25,000 loan at 6.8%: borrower makes 120 payments of \$287.70 equating to \$34,524.10 in total |
| Graduated repayment plan | All borrowers of federal student loans | Borrower will repay loan in 10 years with interest by making payments that increase over time | \$25,00 at 6.8% would make 120 payments beginning at \$197.54 for 2 years, reaching \$431.55 in last year of repayment equating, to \$36,388.89 |
| Extended repayment plan | Borrowers with federal loans over \$30,000 | Borrower will repay loan with either fixed or graduated payments over 25 years | \$48,000 at 6.8% would make 300 payments of \$312.33 equating to \$93,699.73 or make 300 graduated payments beginning at \$258.93 for 2 years then would reach \$435.36 in last year of repayment equating to \$100,910.03 |
| Income-based | Borrowers of loans issued prior to 2008 facing financial hardship | Borrowers make monthly payments equal to 15% of monthly income (if above 150% poverty line) and loan is forgiven after 25 years if not repaid | \$25,000 at 6.8% would pay \$38.00 per month if overall income is \$22,000 annually; if income increases to \$70,000 the borrower automatically enrolled in Standard 10 year plan and must make minimum payments |
| Pay as you earn | Borrowers of loans issued after 2008 facing financial hardship | Borrowers make monthly payments equal to 10% of discretionary income (if above 150% poverty line) and loan is forgiven in 20 years if not repaid | \$25,000 at 6.8% would pay \$25.00 per month if overall income is \$22,000 annually; if income increases to \$60,000 the borrower automatically enrolled in Standard 10 year repayment plan |
| Consolidation | Borrowers of multiple loans | Upon consolidation the loan carries a single interest rate not exceeding 8.25%; the borrower then decides on a fixed, graduated, or income-based repayment plan | Varies based on amount of loan, interest rate after consolidation, and type of loan repayment plan selected |

(Source: National Association for Student Financial Aid Administrators)

3.4 Financial support for widening participation students

Despite different structures and cost systems, all three jurisdictions are trying to put financial security measures in place for underrepresented students. All three nations rely on government-subsidised financing such as grants, bursaries, and work-study (US only) for poorer students. These packages include a mixture of loans, grants, and bursaries, but there is increasing financial incentive to shift the packages to mostly loans. By reducing bursaries and grants, students from poorer backgrounds apply for more loans, accrue more debt, and take longer than their middle-class peers to repay their debt.

3.4.1 US

While the cost of attending higher education differs greatly, both federal and state governments are contributing to the cost. Debates over access in the US are framed in terms of race and the economic barriers that affect participation rates. The nationwide rates of young-person participation in higher education remain elusive. Most rates are broken down in terms of racial profile and not in terms of overall population percentages. In some instances there have been improvements in enrolling underrepresented students, but the African American enrolment has stagnated around 14% (Nook, 2013). President Obama continues to emphasise his commitment to protecting the Pell Grant as a means to ensure that all US citizens have the opportunity to achieve a higher education degree, but the manner in which need is measured (and how often) should also be evaluated (Moses, 2012). In the US, by ensuring economic capital to attend higher education, a barrier to participation is removed. Yet, as stated above, individual states select the types of aid they will provide, and this results in choosing which students to support. This selection is based on state priorities, population, economic need, and social and cultural factors influenced by history. Funding at the institutional level remains in a precarious balance between the proper measurements of financial need and ensuring access. Federal support, however, ensures that universities will attract 'promising' students as well as

support large research initiatives on campus, which leads to private funding and helps to yield well-paying jobs ([Great Lakes System], 2014c, p. 2).

As mentioned above, the US government provides grants designed to support students from low-income backgrounds. The grants provided are the Federal Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant, and service grants (for those in the armed forces). The Pell Grant is calculated as the difference between the cost of attendance at the chosen university and the expected family contribution. While the cost may change with tuition increases or a change in university, the family contribution is based on submitted US tax assessments, socioeconomic status, and employment status. The Pell is specifically reserved for low-income families, and is used as a way to track underrepresented student enrolment in higher education.

Loans, grants, and work-study remain essential to the widening participation effort across America. Table 3.9 displays two separate data fields. The top portion displays the amount of federal aid provided to students attending four-year institutions in two academic years, 2010-11 and 2011-12, by family income level as declared on financial aid applications. The bottom portion demonstrates the net cost of attending a four-year institution after the federal aid is subtracted from the overall cost. It is important to note that the net cost increased from 2010 to 2012 among all income levels regardless of institutional classification. This increase is linked to the amount of federal aid provided as well as university cost. For those attending a public institution with an income between \$0 and \$30,000, in 2010-11 a student could expect to receive \$9,500 in federal aid. In 2011-12, the same student would experience a \$260 decrease in the amount of aid provided. Although the decrease may seem minor, the net price of attending a public institution increased from \$8,190 to \$9,260.

Table 3.9 Average amount of federal loans, grants, or work-study received by students based on income

| Grant and scholarship aid available to students attending four-year institutions | | | | | | |
|---|------------------|-------------|------------|------------------|-------------|------------|
| Institution classification | | | | | | |
| | Public | Private | | Public | Private | |
| | | Non- profit | For-profit | | Non- profit | For-profit |
| | 2010-2011 | | | 2011-2012 | | |
| \$0 to \$30,000 | 9,500 | 17,800 | 5,360 | 9,240 | 18,450 | 5,410 |
| \$30,001 to \$48,000 | 8,790 | 19,390 | 5,000 | 8,560 | 20,350 | 5,190 |
| \$48,001 to \$75,000 | 5,400 | 17,640 | 3,150 | 5,240 | 18,560 | 3,330 |
| \$75,001 to \$110,000 | 2,470 | 15,590 | 1,580 | 2,490 | 16,440 | 1,990 |
| \$110,001 or more | 1,640 | 12,440 | 1,390 | 1,680 | 13,220 | 2,190 |
| Net cost (minus grant, scholarship from Federal Government) of attending four-year institutions | | | | | | |
| Institution classification | | | | | | |
| | Public | Private | | Public | Private | |
| | | Non- profit | For-profit | | Non- profit | For-profit |
| | 2010-2011 | | | 2011-2012 | | |
| \$0 to \$30,000 | 8,190 | 17,080 | 22,270 | 9,260 | 17,840 | 20,680 |
| \$30,001 to \$48,000 | 9,710 | 18,120 | 23,330 | 10,900 | 18,730 | 22,260 |
| \$48,001 to \$75,000 | 13,640 | 21,030 | 26,230 | 14,680 | 21,650 | 25,120 |
| \$75,001 to \$110,000 | 17,100 | 24,610 | 28,790 | 17,910 | 25,160 | 27,690 |
| \$110,001 or more | 18,730 | 31,050 | 31,150 | 19,500 | 31,720 | 30,010 |

(Source: Digest of Education Statistics, 2013, table 331.10)

Since most students and graduates from widening participation backgrounds do not have the means to save, their ability to pay off debt quickly and avoid compounding interest is very small. So, those from low-income backgrounds will pay more over time for their degrees. The office for Federal Student Aid

(2015a) recently released its three-year cohort default rates.¹⁰ Students who graduated in 2012 from a four-year, public university have a default rate of 11.7%. Of the 2,563,157 individuals who entered repayment in 2012, 301,453 individuals defaulted (Federal Student Aid, 2015b). The reality, however, is that because there is a high default rate over the 10 to 20 years the loans are in repayment, the federal government relies on the interest rates to make up for the loss (Warren, 2014). The problem, therefore, is cyclical: the government imposes high interest rates; these high rates compound debt; those unable to pay default, causing the government to keep the rates high.

3.4.2 England

There have been warnings that, despite the Office for Fair Access' access agreements, the increase of student tuition fees and decrease in overall funding levels will drastically affect underrepresented groups (Yorke, 2012). Yet, there does not seem to have been a decline in underrepresented student applicants. Research prior to the *2004 Education Act* and the *2011 White Paper* suggested that the decision to enter higher education by low-income students is not as straightforward as funding alone (see chapter 2). Nevertheless, it will be several years until the true cost of shifting financial responsibility from the government and taxpayers to cost sharing with the individual will be evident. While HEFCE has been working on widening participation since its foundation in 1994, its policies since 1999 continue to affect undergraduate students today. In 1999 the Higher Education Funding Council for England invested in the Widening Participating Formula Funding Allocation. The Formula created their first reoccurring sector funding for full-time disadvantaged students. Starting with academic year 1999-2000, the Funding Council earmarked £20 million for annual funding, and by 2012-13 it had increased to £60 million (HEFCE, 2013a).

¹⁰ A three-year cohort begins at the start of repayment and extends three years.

3.4.3 Scotland

With the abolition of fees, many in Scotland felt that access to higher education would become more egalitarian. Yet, the continual decline of grants and bursaries as part of the undergraduate financial support packages means that all students are occurring more debt despite the lack of tuition fees. Worried about the lack of oversight, *The Post-16 Education Act* appointed the Scottish Funding Council to monitor universities' outcome agreements pertaining to widening access, and address those universities that have not made sufficient progress in their inclusion efforts (see chapter 5 for more information).

Pertaining to the higher education budget, in September 2013, the Scottish government released a draft of its forthcoming budget. In 2014-2015 the budget line was to rise by only 1.2% (previous drafts indicated 1.5%), but despite the budget constraint, it renewed its pledge to ensure free higher education and to provide a minimum of £7,250 in overall financial support (bursaries and loans) to those who suffer the highest economic hardship (Scottish Draft Budget 2014-2015, 2013). Table 3.5 (above) indicated how the support packages were divided based on income. For the 2014-15 academic year the bursary for those earning below £17,000 fell to just £750 (from £1,750, and no bursaries are provided for any other income group) leaving the balance of £6,750 to be administered as a loan (SAAS, 2014). The common theme across all of the changes to the financial packages for Scottish students is that despite all of the changes to the bursary or loan amounts, most of the support package comes as a loan, not as a bursary. So, while the Scottish Government provides strong support packages to students, the difference between loans and bursary amounts can have a large financial impact for underrepresented students. It is for this reason (and the constant changes in amount) that Scottish student finances 'may be one of the least well-understood and most mis-described areas of government policy' (Blackburn, 2014, p. 4.).

Returning back to the figures in table 3.5, only £1,000 separates the poorest and the wealthiest loan amounts provided by the government. This results in the

unequal distribution of debt, as those from middle-class and upper-class backgrounds can absorb debt far more easily than those from poorer backgrounds (Hunter, 2013). Education is government-funded and free to undergraduates, but Scotland's attempt to treat students the same regarding funding packages is creating further inequity for those from poorer backgrounds. Hunter (2013) argued that by 2015-16 'students from lower-income backgrounds will need to borrow well over £20 million more every year, because the Scottish Government has replaced [educational grants] with student loans' (p. 1). Although Scotland provides a minimum of £7,250 worth of financial support to those from the poorest income bracket, individuals earning less than £17,000 will incur far more debt than their peers due to the comparative lack of accessible family income. By the Scottish Government maintaining no fees for its students, government funding is largely going towards paying the fees for all students (despite income level). As the largest proportion of attendees of higher education are middle-class students, a policy of free tuition on the surface looks as though it is redistributive, but it in fact continues to benefit the middle-class.

3.5 Conclusion

The intention of this chapter was to establish the differences in the costs, the financial aid structures, and the types of financial support aimed to widen participation in three jurisdictions. Universities continue to enrol more students, and to accommodate the influx of new students, the cost burden of financing higher education has increasingly shifted from the taxpayers to a cost-shared system. There are several fundamental differences, however, across the three jurisdictions. The first is the variable costs and types of financial support available to US and UK students. In the US, there is substantial variation in costs depending on the type of institution an individual attends. This educational market is not present in the UK as the majority of universities have selected to

charge £9,000, and in Scotland there are no tuition fees for Scottish-domiciled students.

All three jurisdictions have moved towards a cost-shared model of higher education, whereby the individual shares the financial burden with taxpayers. The loans, however, are issued through the government, and, therefore, the government owns the debt. The ownership of debt means that the governments are reliant on their borrowers repaying their loans. Complicating matters is the possibility of students either defaulting or failing to pay their total debt within the timeframe allotted. Both of these outcomes mean that much of the cost of higher education is placed squarely on the taxpayer. Because each government is supplying loans to its student population, each government is putting a lot of financial backing into a system in which some students will be unable to repay their student debt, leaving the government with the defaulted debt. To pay tuition and maintenance fees there are three levels of support in the US: federal, state, and institutional. Student support is means-tested, so each student receives a slightly different package. Additionally, these packages also differ due to the flexibility universities have in the tuition fees they charge. Universities can lower their tuition fees to attract specific students. The UK relies on government loans and grants along with institutional bursaries to support students. The structures for repaying loans also differ. For instance, the varied, but predominately mortgage style of US loans contrasts with the income contingent repayment schemes in the UK, and represents a key difference in each governments' approach to debt.¹¹ Additionally, because the UK uses income contingent repayment plans, students are less financially crippled with debt repayment than the overwhelming majority of American students.

Specifically, all three institutions are under pressure to increase student numbers and attract more widening participation students, and yet are

¹¹ Income-based and pay-as-you-earn repayment programmes are available in the US (see table 3.8). The majority of those in repayment, however, are enrolled in mortgage-style plans.

allocating fewer grants and bursaries to underrepresented students. As with tuition fees, there is also a shift in who is responsible for grants and bursaries. The UK governments, for instance, believe that since the universities have more money (due to charging tuition) they should be able to offer more bursaries. The universities, however, are less likely to offer additional support, though there is nothing stopping them from doing so. Although finance alone does not determine whether students from poorer backgrounds enter higher education (Connor *et al.*, 2001) the educational debt burden is felt disproportionately more by poorer students. Callender (2003) argues that student attitudes toward debt influenced their attendance. Those who were more tolerant to debt were more likely to attend university. Thus, it is not the actual cost that affects participation, but rather student attitudes or perceptions of debt that are key indicators of whether or not a student will attend university. This reality is reflected in the numbers of underrepresented students still entering higher education despite the overall rise in costs. This tension represents the conflict within an expanding system faced with pressure to widen participation and yet is conflicted on how best to support students. It can be argued that the US focuses on economic capital rather than the social and cultural factors that act as barriers to higher education. As a result, a lot of attention is placed on the complex funding structure in the US. Having concluded with the introductory material, the next chapter will outline the methodological position of this thesis and the rationale for why a qualitative, nested multi-site case study was preferable to in order to understand the experience of thirty underrepresented students.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Research Design

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline my epistemological, ontological, and methodological positions. It will establish the rationale for a qualitative, nested multi-site case study, and justify the use of interviews as data sources. Finally, it will review the methodological and ethical considerations pertaining to the research design and enquiry. The primary aim of this chapter is to provide an account of the research conducted and justify the methods.

4.2 Ontological and epistemological frameworks

Embarking on this thesis made me explore my ontological and epistemological positions in a way that I had not done previously. In reading to establish my ontological position, I was confronted by and exposed to the complex social and cultural aspects at the heart of widening participation. I began to appreciate the embedded nature of exclusion, hierarchies, barriers, and identity formation, and, furthermore, how these are reflected in higher education despite government and university widening participation initiatives. My ontological position, or what I feel is possible to know and understand about the social world, I align most closely to 'subtle realism' as described by Hammersley (1992). Specifically, I understand that the social world exists independently from the subjective understanding of an individual; however, that subjective understanding is only available to me by the interpretation of my interviewees (Snape & Spencer, 2010, p. 19). Furthermore, I believe that the viewpoints expressed by each interviewee are shaped by their own understandings, and their lived experiences will yield different responses. Thus, 'reality is only knowable through the human mind and socially constructed meanings' (Snape & Spencer, 2010, p. 16). I believe strongly that the diverse perspectives

resulting from a comparative study will add to understanding the various and often complex ways in which the reality (in this case higher education) was experienced by different individuals.

Understanding the ways of learning and knowing about the social world shaped my epistemological position. There were three main issues I considered pertaining to my stance: the relationship between the research and the researched, 'truth', and the ways knowledge is acquired (Snape & Spencer, 2010). I believe that people are affected by the process of being studied; therefore, the relationship between the researcher and the researched is interactive. My previous professional experience in working with underrepresented university students underpins my belief in the importance of an individual's perspective and awareness of their own experiences. My belief is reinforced by what Vasilachis de Gialdino referred to as the 'epistemology of the known subject' (2009, p. 3).

I first considered whether to adopt a constructivist epistemology—that reality is shaped through an individual's experience. This approach implies that all of the interviews and interpretations are equally valid, and the overall there is no single 'truth'. Yet, because constructionist thinking does not include the input of the social and cultural world on the ways in which an individual interprets his or her world, I decided my epistemological stance must stem from interpretivism. Interpretivism understands that the researcher and the social world affect each other. This stance fits most closely with my ontological positioning and would assist in an understanding of the interviewees' responses through both the perspective of the participant as well as myself (Snape & Spencer, 2010).

Although researchers aim for objectivity and neutrality, neither are fully obtainable (Etherington, 2004). This lack of complete objectivity and neutrality relates back to my ontological stance of 'subtle realism'—that reality is only knowable through our own minds and the socially constructed meanings. More

simply one must recognise personal interpretation (both of the interviewees' perspectives of their reality and that reality understood and portrayed by the researcher). Research, therefore, can never be 'value free', yet it is incumbent upon the researcher to make their assumptions transparent. How these assumptions influence the ways in which the data is collected, analysed, and written is one reason for 'reflexivity' (Etherington, 2004).

Reflexivity is a key concept as it aims to target the greatest uncertainty in qualitative data collection: the social interaction between the interviewer and interviewee. Finlay (2002) identifies five ways to practice reflexivity: introspection, inter-subjective reflection, mutual collaboration, social critique, and discursive deconstruction. Ultimately, the goal is to enhance transparency and accountability in research. I reflected on several questions when designing the information form and interview questions to help expose my own positioning and biases: what are my personal values and beliefs; how has my background led me to be interested in this topic; how does my country of origin, social class, gender, race, and culture affect my positioning relative to widening participation; how have I benefitted from higher education and how have these benefits shaped my understanding of the student experience?

Having explored my ontological and epistemological position, I began to think about overarching questions pertaining to widening participation and the student experience. I did so not only to decipher and be reflexive of my own beliefs, but also to focus on potential research questions such as the following: did jurisdictional initiatives and universities' own strategic plans convey the complexities behind widening participation and beyond statistics? Did their strategic plans acknowledge social characteristics of individuals? Can an individual operate beyond their social and cultural barriers? To answer these types of questions, I needed to move my research away from a policy-driven account of widening participation (though discussions of policy are explored in chapters 3 and 5), and towards an exploration of economic, social, and cultural capital in order to understand the personal nature behind widening

participation. Doing so acknowledges the fluidity between the social constructs as well as the social and cultural hierarchies and boundaries within which individuals are constrained. The literature presented in chapter 2 raised questions as to how underrepresented students apply and leverage their capital, how the structures of family background and individual access to capital affect fitting in, and how students negotiate their identity formation.

Thus, with the combination of widening participation policies, theoretical frameworks, and empirical literature, the research questions were shaped. The three research questions this project will address are the following:

- How do students from underrepresented backgrounds use their economic, social, and cultural capital to gain access to and fit into an elite university?
- How does the funding regime operate within each jurisdiction and institution, and what is the effect on the students' ability to participate?
- How do students from widening participation backgrounds experience life in an elite university?

4.3 Research methods

4.3.1 Methodology

The research explored how 30 student participants from three different elite universities (Great Lakes University, South Hadrian University, and Antonine University) in three jurisdictions (US, England, and Scotland) used their economic, social, and cultural capital to gain access to and fit into their respective universities. Furthermore, I examined whether the social and cultural hierarchies embedded at each institution affected the students' ability to fit in with the university *habitus*. A qualitative methodology was identified as the best method of enquiry as it has the capacity for 'descriptive narratives' that provide

for in-depth analysis of the participants and incorporation of the student voice (Silverman, 2001, p. 33). The intent of qualitative research is to provide 'theoretically grounded, analytical accounts of what happens in reality' (Finch, 1985, p. 113). To address the research aims and questions outlined above, the methods reflected a qualitative approach. To provide background to the experiences offered by the participants, a literature review was conducted to identify the construction of the underrepresented student, university participation rates, and the funding arrangements across all three jurisdictions. The result from this review is presented in chapters 2 and 3 and helps to support chapter 5. Although my main focus is the student experience, chapters 2 and 3 (and to some extent 5) provide background to why these students are considered underrepresented and what initiatives (programmatic and funding) have been created to support students traditionally excluded from elite universities.

4.3.2 Case study

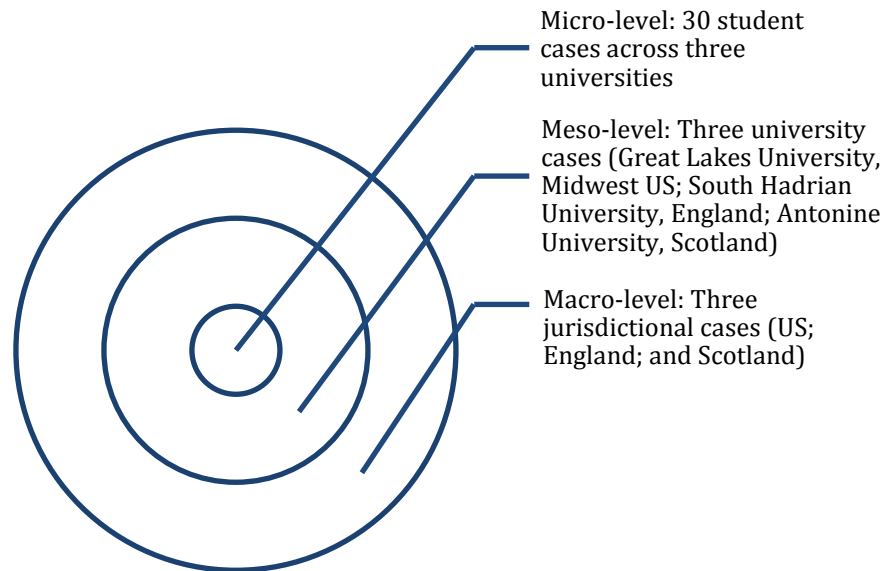
Case study research is an appropriate method to employ when investigating a 'contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context' with permeable boundaries (Yin, 2004, p. 13). In an educational case study, the researcher endeavours to enrich the thinking and discourse of educators either by the development of educational theory or by the refinement of prudence through the systematic and reflective documentation of evidence (Basse, 1999, p. 29). Traditionally, the case study method focuses on an individual unit. The unit constitutes both the strengths and weaknesses of the method (Nisbet & Watt, 1984). One of the main strengths according to Cohen and Manion (1989) is that the case study allows for in-depth analysis of 'the multifarious phenomena that constitute the unit' (p. 296). Case studies are distinguished less by the methodologies 'than by the subjects... of their enquiry' (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 316), and are valuable in discovering naturally occurring phenomena (Bechhofer & Paterson, 2000). Ultimately, I wanted to understand what being an underrepresented student at an elite university felt like to them. Considering Yin's (2004) four-fold typology of case study design single case (holistic and

embedded) and multi-case (holistic and embedded) this thesis sought to explain phenomena across multiple cases by linking these students' experiences to existing literature. The goal, by linking the experiences portrayed by student participants, is to shed light on the implications of current educational and funding policy, and the cultural context affecting the student experience.

4.3.3 Nested multi-site case study

While there are several methods to studying cases, an instrumental case study has been adopted as this method provides insight into specific issues (Creswell, 2009; Stake, 2006; 1994). Indeed, 'by choosing a case, we almost always choose to study its situation' (Stake, 2006 p. 2). This project involved 30 students across three elite universities in three separate countries, and a nested multi-site case study methodology best supported the study's research of multiple cases. The research followed the Chong and Graham (2013) method of using a scaled system (macro, meso, and micro levels) to build a nested case study that included a more comprehensive analysis of widening participation initiatives across the three jurisdictions (see figure 4.1). Overall, this strategy allowed for the collection and analysis of data, including (at the macro level) the history of race in the US, social class in the UK, gender, and politics. The macro focus allowed for the understanding of larger, systemic hierarchies pervasive throughout each jurisdiction. This focus allowed for the comparing and contrasting of widening participation policies and funding approaches. The meso level explored responses among each university's participants, and potentially allowed for establishing trends in the experience at each institution (Chong & Graham, 2013). The micro level examined individual student experiences. This nested study allowed for both the evaluation of widening participation initiatives within a university case as well as a comparison across the three studied.

Figure 4.1 Three tiers of the nested case study



To study a case thoroughly one must first understand the case, and then examine its function and activities (Stake, 2006). Each case (jurisdiction, university, and student) was embedded in another. For instance, the individual student experience was embedded in the culture of the university, and can either be a shared or isolated experience. The university culture can be explained by the larger social and cultural structures that create barriers and hierarchies in accessing elite universities.

4.4 Selecting jurisdictions, institutions, and participants

4.4.1 Selecting jurisdictions

Higher education in the US and UK has undergone considerable expansion since the Second World War (see chapters 2, 3, and 5), and with this expansion, discussions pertaining to the social characteristics of the student body have evolved. Although the approaches to widen participation differ across the three countries (e.g. financial aid, tuition fees, and specific measures for widening participation students) there are similarities (including sector expansion, implementation of tuition fees, and the pressure to widen participation) that all three elite universities have in common. Furthermore, all three are under great

financial and social pressure to increase student numbers and attract more widening participation students. Yet, despite this pressure, elite universities continue to admit fewer underrepresented students than their newer university or community college counterparts. This admission practice results in continuing to admit the same student demographic: middle-class, white students (see chapters 2 and 5). In order to target specifically 'elite' universities, I targeted universities ranking in the top 100 globally. Furthermore, it could be argued that the culture (or *habitus*) at elite universities has also remained unchanged for decades (see chapter 8).

Examining elite US, English, and Scottish universities allows for many comparisons that simply would not be possible otherwise. While the similarity in expansion was seen as one potential avenue for establishing a comparison, on the other hand, the widening participation agenda has been constructed differently in the US and UK. In the US, due to Affirmative Action, underrepresented students are often constructed to be ethnic minorities first and from low socioeconomic backgrounds second; whereas in the UK, the underrepresented student is constructed in terms of socioeconomic status. These cultural differences allow for an international comparison into the different widening participation policy and initiatives. The American sector relies on policy from the 1960s pertaining to access, but in the UK, particularly since 1997, Westminster and Holyrood have been very active in passing higher educational policy (see chapter 5). There is a question as to whether policy has an effect on the student experience.

As a result of expansion, and to support more students in the higher education system, in the US there has long been a tradition of student loans to support tuition fees. More recently, England has implemented tuition fees of £9,000, while Scotland has remained tuition free for Scottish-domiciles. A distinction, therefore, can be made between the US and English jurisdictions (which are creating academic markets due to their charging tuition fees), and the Scottish jurisdiction (which so far has not charged tuition fees to Scottish-domiciles).

Since, in the UK, there is less of a tradition of education debt, the comparison between the US and the two UK jurisdictions will serve to draw out differences between the three. Finally, by comparing three different nations with arguably three different cultures, social comparisons of the participants' experiences can be made. Questions can be explored pertaining to how the universities' *habitus* differ, how differences in student demographics affect feelings of inclusion, and how different social and cultural structures and barriers in each country affect the experience of students.

4.4.2 *Selecting institutions*

The three institutions were selected to reflect not only differences in variables (such as funding, ethnic and racial differences in the student, and location) but also similarities (see table 4.1). While the selection of sites needed to provide the ability to compare and contrast (as described in the last section) it also had to reflect a similar university status—an elite research institution considered to be a global leader in education with highly sought-after undergraduate places. Furthermore, the location of all three institutions highlighted the complex issues surrounding widening participation. The universities were considered to be leading institutions in their regions. The institutions mostly attracted students from economic privilege, yet they were either situated in economically and socially disadvantaged areas or disadvantage featured in the localities surrounding the university. In all three jurisdictions there were divisions between what can be considered 'town' and 'gown' (Heaney, 2013).

All three universities were ranked among the top 100 global institutions according to multiple parties (such as *Times Higher Education*, *US News and World Report*, and *Shanghai Rankings*) and therefore were considered elite. South Hadrian University, in England, was classified as a Russell Group university, and Antonine University, in Scotland, was considered Ancient and part of the Russell Group. Great Lakes (a research university- see chapter 5) was subject to government and state regulation in terms of inclusion policies that compared generally to widening participation initiatives in the UK. Table 4.1

presents more information concerning each institution. The selection was therefore what Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) referred to as ‘convenience sampling’, but within a clear sampling frame. I was aware of the demographics at each of the three elite universities and wondered what the experience of underrepresented students would be.

Table 4.1 Characteristics of three case study universities: Great Lakes, South Hadrian, and Antonine

| Characteristics of case study universities | | |
|--|--|--|
| Great Lakes University | South Hadrian University | Antonine University |
| Located in the Midwest of America | Located in the North of England | Located in the South of Scotland |
| Large research (state) university with a total enrolment of 45,000; 30,000 undergraduate | Russell Group university with a total enrolment around 20,000; 15,000 undergraduate | Ancient & Russell Group university with a total enrolment of 30,000; 20,000 undergraduates |
| 15% from minority/ethnic backgrounds | 4.9% students from low-participation background | 4.9% students from the most deprived area (SIMD 20) |
| WP Initiatives such as Plan 2008, Federal Priorities of 2014, use of pipeline programmes & undergraduate support programmes, Affirmative Action/contextual admission | WP Initiatives such as Sutton Trust summer school, Supported Progression, contextual admission | WP Initiatives such as JUMPS ¹ , Professional Pathways, Access to Creative Education in Scotland, REACH, Sutton Trust summer school, contextual admission |

(Source: Based on data from each university’s website)

Prior to finalising the sampling design, a pilot study was conducted in October 2013 at Great Lakes University to assess whether the leaflets appropriately targeted underrepresented students, and to test the interview schedule (Yin, 1984). The piloting also aimed to identify ambiguities, clarify the wording of questioning, and detect if any new topics should be included in the schedule. The data collected from the pilot resulted in several changes to the interview

¹ The name has been changed to protect the identity of the university.

schedule to ensure participant clarity. The pilot also provided an indication that if an interviewee answered most (if not all) of the questions, the interview would last approximately 45 minutes.

4.5 Negotiating access

Gaining institutional and participant access, especially when discussing a topic like widening participation, represented a significant challenge. Sensitive research is that 'which potentially poses a substantial threat to those who are involved or have been involved' (Lee, 1993, p. 4), or when the cases studied view the research as somehow 'undesirable' (Van Meter, 2000). Since this research included topics like race, poverty, family, finance, and politics, it was considered sensitive research (Lee, 1993). It was critical, therefore, to identify gatekeepers and ask whether they were willing to disseminate information pertaining to this study. More importantly, I had to establish trust amongst the widening participation officers, gatekeepers, and other university contacts by explaining how the data would be reported and that the participants would not be compromised.

4.5.1 Negotiating access to each institution

After receiving ethical approval by the School of Education Ethics Committee at the University of Edinburgh, I made contact with all three institutions to conduct a study at their universities'. I identified myself in all correspondence and paperwork as a doctoral researcher at the University of Edinburgh. Approval to proceed at Antonine and South Hadrian was granted immediately. An issue arose at Great Lakes, however, as the university required additional ethical approval supported by a member of the university's academic staff as Principal Investigator (PI). A member of academic staff at Great Lakes was contacted and initially agreed to be PI in November 2013. Difficulty arose, however, when, due to my external researcher status, I was unable to be part of the ethics application. This meant I had to rely on the PI to complete my

application. This caused months of delay, but once I was onsite (March 2014) I met with an individual in charge of the ethics applications, and they assisted me to ensure I had the correct ethical clearance.

4.5.2 The role of gatekeepers in accessing participants

Once access was granted at all three universities, 'purposive sampling' was used in each jurisdiction to target potential administrators and students (Punch, 2000, p. 193). In order to begin sampling, however, initial contacts and gatekeepers were identified. The use of gatekeepers was vital to the sampling of this study. Indeed, access to student participants was entirely controlled by the gatekeepers at each university (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). As others have noted, gatekeepers might want to avoid, instigate, contain, or spread risk, and therefore might limit access, or could '[shepherd] the fieldworker in one direction or another' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p. 65). Because gatekeepers were essential to gaining access to student participants, it is important to recognise that the gatekeepers may only have provided access to students who represented a specific viewpoint (Flick, 2009). The Assistant Dean (head of widening participation) at Great Lakes served not only as a gatekeeper, but also as an interviewee (see chapter 5 and table 4.2). His participation as a gatekeeper was due to high volumes of first-generation, low-income, underrepresented students of colour enrolled in university-supported, four-year, undergraduate programmes that he oversaw as part of his post. The gatekeepers in the UK, however, were not the heads of widening participation featured in this study. The gatekeeper at South Hadrian was an academic support officer who provided holistic and academic support to 500 students. That individual contacted both potential students and her colleagues to ensure I could gain access. The widening participation office at Antonine University was also contacted, although an initial contact who supervised a mentoring programme for the widening participation office resulted in no student contact strategies. The gatekeepers at Antonine, therefore, were two individuals outside of the widening participation programme: a lecturer in the School of Education and a college access course officer.

Table 4.2 Total individuals who served as gatekeepers

| Overview of gatekeepers in three jurisdictions | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| | <i>Great Lakes</i> | <i>South Hadrian</i> | <i>Antonine</i> |
| Total individuals who served as gatekeepers | 5 (Head of widening participation, 2 programme directors, 2 campus-wide advising officers, 1 academic course leader) | 1 (Holistic and academic support officer) | 2 (Access course officer, Lecturer in School of Education) |
| Gatekeeper was also head of widening participation | Yes | No | No |

4.5.3 Sampling

A representative sample produces results to formulate wider generalisations. A full discussion on generalisability will be discussed in the next section, but, in short, it can be argued that generalisability can only be achieved by using a large random sample. Yet, generalisability was not the aim of this study, as I was interested in the experiences of underrepresented students prior to and during their elite university experience. A representative sample of the undergraduate student experience, therefore, was not selected since this was an in-depth case study focusing on a small student demographic. This resulted in selecting a purposeful sample. A purposeful, opportunistic approach to sampling was taken at all three universities. Patton (2002) offers a comprehensive discussion of purposeful sampling, describing that the

logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling (p. 23).

In this project, opportunist sampling was used since, in the UK jurisdictions, it was difficult to identify the widening participation student population, as the

offices were reluctant to give out such data. This resulted in the inclusion of students who reported as fulfilling two or more criteria and felt underrepresented (see table 4.3).

Across the three institutions, slightly different criteria were used when selecting students because of the differing cultures. Identity is bound to race and racial identity in the US. Furthermore, there is a strong correlation between race and socioeconomic status due to the economic limitations people of colour experience (US Census Bureau, 2012). This resulted in race becoming a primary marker due to Affirmative Action initiatives (Holzer & Neumark, 2006). Affirmative Action is one of the policies used to widen participation in the US. Because racial background drives Affirmative Action, the status of people of colour is apparent, particularly at elite and predominately white institutions. Students are aware of their socioeconomic status because of the federal Pell grant (see chapter 3). The US federal government relies on tax data to assess economic disadvantage. Students awarded the Pell grant are understood by the institution to be from a low-income family. This is why the Pell grant was used as a second marker in this study.

In the UK, identity is heavily bound to social class hierarchies and norms (Preston, 2007). Scotland and England use widening participation markers relating to socioeconomic status and neighbourhood (see chapter 5). Although widening participation offices are aware of students' socioeconomic status, this classification is not always made known to the student. For that reason, it was more likely that students would be aware that they were the first in their family to attend university, participated in a programme designed to raise aspirations, or came from a low-income background (see table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Criteria used to advertise research study to gatekeepers and potential student participants

| Criteria for selecting student cases | | |
|--|--|---|
| Great Lakes | South Hadrian | Antonine |
| Traditional university age: 18-25 years | Traditional university age: 18-25 years | Traditional university age: 18-25 years |
| First in immediate family to attend a four-year higher education institution | First in immediate family to attend a higher education institution | First in immediate family to attend a higher education institution |
| Low income (Pell recipient, Work/study recipient) Underrepresented student of colour as defined by the State: Chicano/®, Latino/®, African American, Southeast Asian, American Indian | Low income (from NS-SEC 4-7, though asked: 'do you consider yourself to be from a low-income background'), attended a low-participation school, from a low participation neighbourhood (POLAR 3) | Low income (from NS-SEC 4-7, though asked: 'do you consider yourself to be from a low-income background'), attended a low-participation school, from a low participation neighbourhood (SIMD 20-40) |
| Member of pre-university pipeline programme or support programme for undergraduates | Recipient of EMA, university grants, bursaries Participate in pre-university summer access course | Recipient of EMA, university grants, bursaries Participate in pre-university summer access course |

Each student had to believe that their social, cultural, and economic background was underrepresented at their institution in some way, and more specifically, that their embedded characteristics (economic disadvantage, social class background, race, and gender) created inequalities and affected how they experienced university. The criteria were selected by incorporating several university measures that determined a student's widening participation status, for instance, first-generation status. Table 4.3 represents criteria used to recruit potential student participants. All of the participants had to meet at least two. Some students self-reported they were recipients of free school meals, education maintenance allowance (EMAs), or educational bursaries, and therefore, were eligible to participate. Socioeconomic status was a priority in this study, but it is important to acknowledge that there are other protected characteristics by which universities identify underrepresented students (of

which race is one). For this study, however, the characteristics in table 4.3 were targeted.

To attract participants, offices assigned to widen participation were contacted first (though, as indicated above, only in the US case did the Assistant Dean serve as a gatekeeper). Undergraduate academic advising offices (in the US case) and academic staff (in the UK cases) were contacted second. At Great Lakes, two additional widening participation programme directors were approached due to their work in organising pre-university pipeline programmes as well as four-year student support programmes specifically geared towards underrepresented students (these programmes would be labelled widening participation programmes at South Hadrian or Antonine). The directors agreed to publicise the project by emailing enrolled students. Altogether, the Great Lakes programme directors notified around 400 students at various stages in their undergraduate studies. These emails resulted in eleven student volunteers. Simultaneously, because not all students from underrepresented backgrounds were enrolled in support programmes, academic offices outside of widening participation were targeted with the purpose of interviewing students in the majority population who might have been admitted without a widening participation tag. Two campus-wide advising offices at Great Lakes agreed to help in this regard. One advisor within a large undergraduate advising office (with no affiliation to underrepresented students) contacted their cohort of about 70 students. While there was one interested participant, an illness by the student made it impossible to meet by the deadline, so no participants resulted from this effort. Similarly, one undergraduate course leader within the College of Arts and Sciences agreed to contact their cohort of about 600 students (though few would have fit the criteria). One who self-identified as first-generation and low-income volunteered and became a participant in this study.

The widening access office at South Hadrian was slow to return emails or phone calls. As a result, an alternative contact was identified. An academic support

officer was contacted because she provided holistic and academic support to 500 students. This individual strongly pledged support for this project and forwarded the research information (see appendix 1) to colleagues around the university. This resulted in this individual's becoming a key gatekeeper (mentioned above). Because of that email, several other officers became contacts and offered to get in touch with students on my behalf. Due to the support from a variety of officers and academic staff (led by the gatekeepers) students were very eager to participate. Within one week, ten participants had agreed to take part. The importance of identifying a gatekeeper, who provides access to the university structure and facilitates access to students cannot be underestimated (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). The ease with which students were identified was solely due to the one high-ranking individual who believed in the project. Without this individual, identifying participants would have taken far more time and would have been far more difficult.

Identifying participants in Scotland was by the far the most challenging. While widening participation officers seemed enthusiastic, many appeared reluctant to mention the study to any undergraduates. One officer in the widening participation office softly refused to help and suggested posting the project on a university website designed for students to find volunteer employment. Research featured in chapters 2 and 6 demonstrates why posting on a volunteer-centred website would have been unlikely to reach many who identified as underrepresented. The officer's refusal could have stemmed from the worry of identifying and potentially ostracising undergraduates with a widening participation tag. Accordingly, I had to identify gatekeepers outside the widening participation office. While locating students by identifying them in a university database would have allowed for reaching a wide range of students, academic staff and officers differed in their ability to access and track 'tagged' students in the university system. Since access students were very likely to match the research criteria, a college access officer (gatekeeper) who directed a college access course was contacted and agreed to email students on my behalf. Initially, seven access students indicated their willingness to participate; four

completed the interview process. To recruit additional students, an academic staff member in the School of Education was pursued due to their oversight of large introductory undergraduate modules. The academic staff member in the School of Education contacted students and provided the contact information of a colleague in biological sciences. A contact in biological science provided an opportunity to achieve a balance of social and natural science participants. I felt this was important due to the difference in widening participation student demographics in each discipline. From this effort, five students resulted, though four completed the interviews.

It is important to note that I was not copied in to any of the emails sent to the potential student participants, thus it is unclear how large the sampling pool actually was in this study. There were several consequences to this approach. A flier (see appendix 1) and a template email were sent to each of my gatekeepers for guidance; however, it was unclear what was specifically communicated in the emails. Students who were contacted could have been previously identified by the gatekeeper as outspoken about university issues or representing similar views to themselves. Although the intention of this study was to attract a self-selecting group of participants, because the gatekeepers directly contacted students, the specific language used to attract students remain to some extent unknown.

4.5.4 Outcome of sampling

All of the participants who volunteered matched at least two of the criteria. For instance, three of the twelve participants at Great Lakes were not first-generation (see table 4.4). One parent had even achieved an advanced degree, but the individual student (Christopher, 22, Akan) considered himself underrepresented due to his ethnic and socioeconomic background (and did meet federal low-income guidelines). A second Great Lakes participant (Michael, 23, African American) also had a parent graduate from higher education, yet due to his parent's struggles with depression and incarceration, and the student's own struggles with race relations, he too felt he qualified for the study.

Likewise, at Antonine, three adult students beyond the traditional 18-25 year age range participated. As with the Great Lakes students, the Antonine participants believed that their social and cultural characteristics created inequalities in higher education. Those who felt powerless or oppressed wanted to take part. Some participants' socioeconomic status suggested that they were not from severely low-income backgrounds but were right at the threshold (set by the UK or US) that determined need. Fifteen participants met all of the criteria (they are identified with an asterisk in table 4.4).

At all three institutions at least eight participants were identified. At Great Lakes, seven of twelve participants identified as female and five as male. Similar patterns existed in the UK, with seven females, three males at South Hadrian, and five females, three males at Antonine. Tables 4.2 and 4.4 provide information relating to the social characteristics of the participants.

4.5.5 Generalisability

As introduced above, many academics have offered examples of the evaluation of external validity (Cohen & Manion, 1989; Bassey, 1999; Stake, 2006; Thomas, 2011), and a concern regarding generalisability still prevails. For instance, Lincoln and Guba (1985) write that the only generalisation about case studies is that there is no generalisation. Yet, Flyvbjerg argues that a common misconception of qualitative study is the lack of generalisability. He writes that 'knowledge [which] cannot be formally generalised does not mean that it cannot enter into the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field or society' (2006, p. 227). In essence, generalisability (otherwise known as transferability or validity) is concerned with the ability to draw inferences from one study to wider populations or contexts (Lewis, 2010). Lewis (2010) argues that qualitative studies cannot generalise on a statistical basis (as quantitative studies can). The range of views and experiences shared by the participants, however, along with the wider social and cultural context that shape and influence the participants, can 'be inferred to the researched population' (p. 269). Stake (1994) agrees and suggests that, despite the unique nature of each

case, a case is an example within a larger context, and thus, the possibility of transferability should not be discounted. This nested multi-site case study did not seek to achieve statistical generalisability, but rather it aimed to understand how a specific group of individuals interpreted their undergraduate experience at a very specific point in time. Said another way, I was not interested in generalisability, but rather an in-depth understanding of how widening participation efforts of elite universities, as well as the economic, social, and cultural aspects of higher education, affect a specific group of underrepresented students. My hope was that this research had the potential to inform study and add to the existing work on widening participation and the student experience. It is with that intention that I selected the sample.

4.6 Data gathering with students

Two methods were used to gather data: first, an information form (appendix 2); second, a face-to-face, semi-structured interview. The information form was designed to identify characteristics such as age, family background, and amount of student debt. Each participant took part in a face-to-face interview of 45 minutes.

4.6.1 Information form

After students volunteered to be research participants, an information form was emailed for their completion prior to the interview. The form was the first chance to gather information on the student participants. It gathered basic information, such as name, age, degree classification, and it allowed each participant time to gather information pertaining to their loan and bursary amounts. Additionally, the form was designed to assist with providing a clear direction for the semi-structured interview (see appendices 3 and 4). Deciding what type of questions, and how many to pose to the participant, proved to be difficult. The form passed through a number of drafts, and a substantial period of time went into the construction, revision, and refinement of the questions

(Oppenheim, 1992). Each form incorporated wording from both the US and UK to ensure there was no confusion between terms. Each individual submitted their information in enough time to adjust the semi-structured interview questions to fit loosely with each participant. For instance, 'debt anxiety', was a topic that always required follow-up questions. The follow-up questions predominately focused on whether the anxiety students experienced as a result of assuming educational debt (or assuming no debt, but balancing employment with university) affected their academic performance or university participation.

Table 4.4 Overview of participants' self-reported characteristics

| Great Lakes participants | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---|----------------------|---|
| Pseudonym | Age | Race/Ethnicity | First generation | Focus of study | Year of study | Widening participation programme affiliation¹ |
| Jessica* | 21 | Mexican | Y | Human Development & Family | 4 | PEOPLE/ AAP/CAE |
| Michael | 23 | African American | N; mother & father | Anthropology | 4 | AAP/CAE/McNair/[GL]ANNER |
| Christopher | 22 | Akan (African) | N; father | Sociology | 4 | AAP/CAE/PEOPLE |
| Ashley | 21 | Hispanic | N; mother | Psychology & Spanish | 3 | Pathways (2 yr.) |
| Kayla* | 23 | Black/White | Y | Sociology | 4 | PEOPLE/ CeO |
| Sarah* | 20 | Mexican American | Y | African Languages, Literature & Political Science | 3 | PEOPLE |
| Samantha* | 21 | Tibetan | Y | History & History of Science | 4 | PEOPLE/ CAE |
| Matthew* | 18 | Laotian | Y | Computer Science | 1 | PEOPLE |
| Joshua* | 22 | Vietnamese/ Chinese | Y | MHR & Chinese | 3 | CAE, PEOPLE |
| Brandon* | 20 | African American | Y | Biology | 3 | CAE/ MSC |
| Elizabeth* | 20 | White American | Y | History & Psychology | 2 | N |
| Taylor* | 20 | Hmong American | Y | Pre-Nursing | 2 | AAP/PEOPLE |

¹ See appendix 8 for definitions of programmes listed.

South Hadrian participants

| Pseudonym | Age | Race/Ethnicity | First generation | Focus of study | Year of study | Widening participation programme affiliation |
|------------------|-----|----------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|--|
| Chloe* | 22 | White English | Y | Sociology | 3 | Reach for Excellence/EMA |
| Jack* | 21 | White Welsh | Y | English literature & History | 3 | N |
| Emily* | 19 | White English | Y | English Literature & Philosophy | 2 | Aim, Aspire & Achieve |
| Megan | 21 | White English | Y | English Literature | 3 | N |
| Sophie | 19 | White Northern Irish | Y | Ed Studies & Sociology | 2 | N |
| Charlotte | 19 | White English | Y | Sociology | 2 | N |
| Hannah | 20 | White English | Y | Ed Studies & Geography | 2 | N |
| Olivia* | 19 | White English | Y | History | 1 | Supported Progression |
| Thomas | 20 | White English | Y | English Literature | 2 | N |
| James | 21 | White English | Y | Mathematics | 3 | N |

| Antonine participants | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|------------|-----------------------|--|-------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| Pseudonym | Age | Race/Ethnicity | First generation | Focus of study | Year of study | Widening participation programme affiliation |
| Emma | 35 | White Scottish | Y | Sociology & Psychology | 2 | Access Course |
| Lauren | 29 | White Scottish | Y | Primary & Community Education | 2 | Access Course |
| Rebecca | 40 | White Scottish | Y | Social Work | 2 (but repeated) | Access Course |
| Amy | 25 | White Scottish | N; father | Primary Education | 2 | N |
| Ryan | 19 | White Scottish | N; mother as mature student just completed | Physical Education | 2 | N |
| Andrew* | 20 | White Scottish | Y | Primary Education | 2 | N |
| David* | 25 | White Scottish | Y | Biological Sciences | 3 | N |
| Rachel* | 22 | White Scottish | Y | Biological Sciences | 2 (but repeated) | Y, but not for current course |

4.6.2 Conducting interviews

A face-to-face interview was selected as the most effective type of data collection as it not only provided historical information like family and education background, but also allowed for the researcher to be in control of the line and structure of questioning (Creswell, 2009). The interview also provided a flexible way of understanding and exploring people's thoughts and feelings on a matter (Robson, 1993). Acknowledging the biases and limitations of this type of data collection was important. A lack of standardisation (or the flexibility) of interviews raised questions about the validity of a qualitative interview. As a result, some standardisation in questioning was introduced by using a semi-structured approach with an interview schedule for the student participants. This method was adopted because of its ability to conceptualise clear questions and prompts, while allowing both standardisation and flexibility (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013). By using interview protocols (Creswell, 2009) each schedule included the following components: heading, instructions for the interviewer and review of consent, introductory questions (typically ice-breakers such as: *can you tell me a bit about yourself?*), probing questions, and closing (see appendix 4). The subject matter and the ordering of the questioning reflected the research questions—for instance, the first block of questioning addressed finance, while the second block concerned acquisition of social and cultural capital. This would later structure the findings chapters (see section 4.8 Data analysis). The final schedule was a result of numerous drafts, which resulted from a pilot study (Yin, 1984). The pilot also provided an indication of the natural order of conversation once the interview questions were posed. At this time, the questions (and their order) were finalised to reflect the information gained.

Each participant, regardless of jurisdiction, answered questions from a wide range: personal background, family resources, university finances, fitting in and campus life, relating to an elite institution, participation in access/support programmes, social class position, and gender. Race was not an initial topic on

the interview schedule, though every Great Lakes student related nearly all the above topics to race, racism, or their racial identity. Each topic directly correlated to a research question, such as family background and family resources as related to capital.

The thirty face-to-face interviews with students ranged from 45 to 75 minutes, and were conducted over a period of seven months (February to August 2014). All of the interviews took place on university grounds, either in academic offices or conference rooms. The conference rooms were reserved in large time blocks to maintain participant confidentiality.

It was essential to understand the complexities of the widening participation initiatives in order to have a more complete picture of the student experience. Silverman suggests that qualitative methods ‘provide a deeper understanding’ of social interactions (2000, p. 8). Therefore, to gain a deeper understanding of the ethos, mission, and potential barriers that face widening participation students, face-to-face interviews were conducted with the head of widening participation at all three universities. All three of the individuals had been employed for at least eight years—enough time to understand the day-to-day workings of the university and be able to situate the university in a wider context. They represented the experts of widening participation at their institution and were asked to discuss topics such as the regulation of funding for their widening participation students body and the extent to which they were constricted by the government regulations and initiatives. These interview ranged from 60 to 75 minutes in length (see appendix 4). All of the heads were interviewed once, but the head of widening participation at Antonine was the only individual who agreed to a follow-up interview. That interview lasted less than 45 minutes.

4.6.3 Interview style

Since ‘cultural categories are organized and defined by language’, it was important to acknowledge that there were slight differences in communication

styles across the jurisdictions (Punch, 2000, p. 186). This resulted in slight differences in colloquial style where appropriate during the interview. Any differences in language or idiom were reflected in both the audio recording and the transcription. At times, students were asked to spell and define words outside the researcher's understanding.

While reflexivity has already been addressed, it is important to note my own race, gender, and social class position because I asked about deeply personal instances of racism, masculinity and laddism, social class stereotypes, poverty, and homelessness. I am a white female of middle-class origins in the United States. Differences in identity could have resulted in my lack of understanding subtle meanings or cues during the UK interviews (Stake, 2006). In the American jurisdiction I had prior knowledge and familiarity with the culture. I had been a participant in the US undergraduate context, whereas I was an outsider in the UK context. I, therefore, could have assumed meaning at Great Lakes. On the other hand, in England and Scotland I could have been unaware of the types of student experiences, so perhaps could have asked more probing questions. During and after the interview, I endeavoured to co-construct the knowledge provided by each participant.

4.6.4 Transcription

Kowal and O'Connell (2014) expressed that 'the appropriate use of transcription entails an awareness of problems related to the tasks of both the transcriber and the reader of the transcript—conceptualized as language users who bring their own habits, competencies and limitations to these tasks' (p. 65). There is no completely accurate system of transcription notation; rather, there is the 'inevitable risk of systematic bias of one kind or another' (Kowal & O'Connell, 2014, p. 66). With this understanding, all interviews were transcribed in full, verbatim by myself over the course of five months. The transcripts were punctuated to transform spoken expressions into a written document (Roulston, 2014). To remain true to the participants' interviews, utterances such as 'umm', 'ahh', and 'like' were transcribed. By doing this, consideration

was given to the pauses or words spoken when a student was thinking or becoming emotional. As suggested by Roulston (2014), consideration was also given to the particular ways each individual spoke (e.g. dialect) and whether or not these provide insight into the individual or contribute to 'unfavorable stereotypes of specific groups' (Roulston, 2014, p. 299).

4.7 Ethics

The research was conducted according to the ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) 2011 framework, the American Educational Research Association (AERA) 2011 code of ethics, as well as the Moray House School of Education framework. The aim of this study was not to isolate further or enhance the feelings that individuals had regarding belonging or fitting in. Each participant, therefore, had to volunteer by taking the initial step of contacting the interviewer by email. There were several reasons why it was crucial to consider potential ethical issues. Because of the flexible nature of qualitative research design, it was impossible to anticipate the reaction interviewees could have to each question. A small number of participants became distressed when responding to questions involving family. When this happened, participants were offered the opportunity to stop the interview. Interviews stopped in two cases to allow the students to gather themselves, and, when the students were ready, the interview continued. It was crucial to understand the 'subject closeness' that comes with understanding and accurately writing about their opinions and thoughts (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). At times the participants shared personal details of family hardship or expressed sadness, and it was vital to understand the emotional element that comes with qualitative research, and yet remain distant to avoid influencing the student's story. During three interviews, students addressed issues pertaining to family or the university, and wished to remove their comments from the transcript. Their wishes were reflected in the transcript.

4.7.1 Informed consent

All of the participants provided written and oral consent to take part in the research. Prior to the interview, participants were provided time to review the consent form and ask questions. The forms described how data from the information forms and interview would be used (see appendix 2). One important aspect of informed consent is that participation is voluntary (Ritchie & Lewis, 2010). All participants, therefore, were verbally reminded during the interview preamble of their option to skip questions, stop the interview, or fully remove themselves from the project at any time. Additionally, the participants understood about how long it would take to complete the interview as well as the range of topics that would be addressed (Ritchie & Lewis, 2010).

4.7.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

Ensuring the names of institutions and participants were kept confidential was vital. Institutions were named after natural or land-made land barriers found in their localities. This was to ensure that the students were comfortable in sharing their feelings without worry or stress due to possible retaliation amongst the student body. Confidentiality began at the time of coding, and no individual other than the researcher has had access to the data (Hammersley & Traianou, 2000). Furthermore, all participant names were changed to protect their identity. The participants differed in nationality, ethnic background, and age. Because every name carries unconscious stereotypes, selecting names was done carefully and with a purpose. To keep bias to a minimum, randomisation in selecting a group of names was crucial. Despite ethnic variation, all of the participants recorded common first names, though there were variations in spelling. It is important to note that some of the US participants could have recorded an anglicised version of their name on the information form, and, therefore, the researcher was not made aware of their given name. To anonymise students, names from the twenty most popular baby names in each jurisdiction in 1990 (the decade when most students were born) were selected. Study names were assigned by a subject's interview date. Thus, the earlier the interview date, the more popular the baby name (i.e. the first English

participant was assigned the most popular English baby name for their sex in 1990). Any repetition in study name was also determined by interview date. Thus, if two jurisdictions shared the name 'Andrew' the first subject interviewed took priority. The subject with the later date would be assigned the next most popular name.

4.7.3 Protecting the participants from harm

Sieber and Stanley (1988) defined 'socially sensitive research' as 'studies in which there are potential consequences or implications, either directly for the participants in the research or for the class of individuals represented by the research' (p. 49). Although this definition is broad, it is important to consider that participants taking part in research may experience adverse effects. Sensitive topics such as racism, classism, and family background may uncover painful experiences or even uncover information not previously shared (Lewis, 2010). Furthermore, as Lewis argues, 'interviews can have a certain seductive quality', so although participants may appear comfortable and willing to answer questions, they may regret doing so later (2010, p. 68). Lee and Renzetti (1990) explore the 'cost' of taking part in sensitive research: psychological (shame, guilt, or embarrassment) or social (loss of friends). To protect the participants from harm, several steps were taken. First, participants were given a clear summary of the issues that the study would address prior to the start of the interview. Sensitive topics, or any questions that might produce answers of a sensitive nature were addressed through clear and direct questioning (Lewis, 2010). Several times during the interviews, students became upset and emotional. At that time the interview was stopped, they were provided space, and they were given the option to stop the interview. Following each interview, the participant was provided time to revisit a topic, clarify an answer, or ask questions pertaining to confidentiality.

4.8 Data analysis

The interviews resulted in a large amount of data. As recommended by Merriam (1998), even while data collection was taking place, analysis had already commenced. Once transcribed, the interview transcripts were reviewed to ensure that nothing was missed in the transcription process. This review was also helpful because it allowed me to get a general sense of each student's overall meaning and tone. Because large amounts of data are common in case study research, Bassey (1999) suggests condensing the information into broad themes or categories 'firmly based on the raw data' in order to organise it (p. 70). Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor (2003) suggest using content analysis to explore the themes expressed by the participants. The data was loosely structured on broad themes because of the interview schedule: personal background, family resources, university finances, fitting in and campus life, relating to an elite institution, participation in support programmes, social class position, and gender views. These categories were used initially to organise the raw data and were assigned 'colours'. A copy of each transcript was made to allow for the original transcript to remain unaltered, while the copy was coded. Instead of coding specific words, I decided to segment sentences and paragraphs within the transcript by colour-coding the text (Creswell, 2009). This decision was made in order to get a sense of the larger picture. The broad themes were assigned a highlighted text colour (e.g. green for finance), and the transcripts were reviewed for any quotes or statements that fit into one of the themes. This allowed for easy sight-comparisons of multiple transcriptions, and resulted in identifying new abstract codes for data segments that did not fit into the original broad categories. By colour-coding the segments, it became clear that some of the transcripts needed reorganisation based on the established themes. For instance, some participants spoke about finance when discussing their family or campus life. This resulted in several new categories: 'race', 'rah/yas/lad stereotypes', 'debt', 'employment', and 'locals'. Under these headings, the students' testimonies were compared.

The data was sorted a second time by participant into the original categories: background, family resources, university finances, fitting in and campus life, relating to an elite institution, participation in support programmes, social class, and gender. Three overarching themes were identified from the original categories (which incorporated the newly identified categories such as race). The overarching themes were economic, social, and cultural capital. The three headings were suggested by the literature and provided a structure to the chapters. Additionally, it was suggested in my second year that organising the data in narratives would allow for easy sight-comparisons of multiple transcriptions (see appendix 5). Finch (1987), Miller *et al.*, (1997), and Poulou (2001) all noted the benefits of creating organised narratives because they allow for the study (and isolation) of complex issues expressed by participants. After working with the narratives, however, I decided to return to the three overarching themes because they followed the literature and allowed for a more straightforward analysis of the data. Triangulating the reports provided by the participants with different sources provided justification for these three themes (Creswell, 2009). This return to the themes seemed at the time to be the most sensible approach.

Having completed a second data sort, I created a large table to organise the responses from the information form and key words from the interview (see appendix 7.1A, 7.2A, 7.3A, 7.4A). The table was divided into sections: personal and educational background (see appendix 7.1A), finance (see appendix 7.2A), capital and *habitus* (see appendix 7.3A), and identity (see appendix 7.4A). The capital and *habitus* section reported pre-university networks, pre-university educational support, university networks, university culture, and whether the student felt as though they belonged. The identity section encapsulated feelings of transition, whether or not students felt prepared (or saw themselves as a university student), fitting in, and agency. The table, along with the highlighted full-text categories, served to organise the data in easy-to-understand sections. Also, the table allowed for easy comparisons of participations, institutions, and across the three jurisdictions.

4.9 Unforeseen limitations and obstacles

The limitations and obstacles of this study were the complexities of comparing and contrasting three jurisdictions and the breadth of the data collected. First, as discussed in opening of this chapter, I believe in the importance of an individual's perspective and awareness of their own experience, 'the known subject' (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2009, p. 3). Furthermore, I understand that the researcher and the researched are affected (differently) by the outside world. I have come to recognise the importance of personal interpretation (both of the interviewees' perspectives of their reality and that reality understood and portrayed by the researcher). One of the complexities of this study was ensuring a co-construction of knowledge in each interview in each jurisdiction. Prior to, during, and after each interview I was constantly reflecting on my own positioning and trying to access their experience in an authentic way.

Second, it was unexpectedly difficult to identify students from Antonine. In consequence, I allowed three returning-adult students to participate. All of the three met at least two criteria for the study, yet while they offered many fruitful discussions, it split the sample into 'mature student' versus 'traditional age student' and added additional complexity to an already complex task. Most importantly, it meant that I was unable to give the time to address the particular experience of returning adult learners (in any event, doing so was not in the bounds of the research study). This resulted in having less comparable data. Furthermore, one audio recording was lost due to user error. One of the Antonine interviews was incomplete as only the first five minutes (the introduction of the interview schedule) recorded, and as a result it was unable to be included, so nine participants became eight. In sampling, DePaulo (2000) reported that a sample must be large enough to ensure that diverse perspectives are represented. Regardless of the challenges at Antonine, I

endeavoured to reflect accurately the experiences reported by the underrepresented students.

It would be difficult to overstate the complexities of comparing and contrasting three jurisdictions, three universities situated in these jurisdictions, widening participation officers who are employed by the universities, and thirty undergraduates. It was, at times, very difficult to find comparable data due to the US and UK using different benchmarks and measurements concerning widening participation characteristics, student enrolment, finance, and poverty. For instance, the UK often uses a proportion, such as the proportion of school leavers who enter higher education from public school, whereas the US uses national (and state) raw data numbers, such as 18 million students entered higher education in 2013. This made it difficult to compare the types of students enrolling. Also, while US educational policy has remained fairly static since the 1960s, educational policy in the UK shifts nearly monthly. The restlessness of the UK higher education system created difficulties not only in staying on top of the most up-to-date information, but also in finding similar US comparisons for Great Lakes. Also prevalent was the nature of culture and identity amongst the student participants. This was reflected in how the participants related to me, the researcher. The American students were much more open and more likely to speak beyond 45 minutes. This type of acceptance, and gatekeeper support, was also apparent at South Hadrian because the gatekeeper had vetted me. I believe this had a large impact in the type of data recorded from these two sites.

The potential obstacles in this study included the following: a lack of support by university officials; difficulties with ethical clearance at Great Lakes University; the researcher's presence creating biased answers and some interviewees' becoming extremely nervous or emotional (Creswell, 2009). Finally, because of the variety of the themes that resulted from the collected data, decisions had to be made of what data to include and what to exclude. Fruitful discussions of meritocracy, the American Dream, masculinity and laddism, and gender balance at universities are simply touched on, but not given the space for full discussion

in this thesis. These topics were not explored further in order to address more thoroughly larger issues of economic, social, and cultural capital.

4.10 Conclusion

While the qualitative method has limitations and critics, it offers an in-depth understanding of social issues. The transcription and drafting of each case study represented the first stage of data analysis, and allowed for more time to interpret and understand the data. Since the study examined personal experiences, lengthy transcripts were an integral part of this enquiry. The process of transcribing, coding, and organising student transcripts significantly contributed to my understanding of the dynamics and the social constructions that shape identity. The student voice was always kept at the centre of this project.

Overall, this study aims to understand the vastness of student identities, and how social constructs, access to capital, hierarchies, and barriers transcend policy and, thus, influence who each individual believes themselves to be—student, man, woman, middle-class, working-class, rich, impoverished, white or ethnic minority. This thesis aims to acknowledge how unpredictable and how different the underrepresented student experience can be. Chapter 2 reviewed the empirical and theoretical literature pertaining to widening participation. Chapter 3 introduced the financial structures in place at each jurisdiction to support students. Chapter 5 will address widening participation policy with interviews of the heads of widening participation in all three jurisdictions. This organisation allows for the incorporation of policy, theory, and empirical study to enlighten the methods and drive the research design. Ultimately, the qualitative, nested multi-site case study approach (and the decision to collect interview data) led to the recognition that students were experts in their own lives and their own experiences. It is hoped that each prior chapter and my choice of method and design have allowed my conclusions to be considered

trustworthy and for the student voice to remain at the centre of this study. The next chapter will examine widening participation policy across the three jurisdictions and how each university has applied policy to attract and support underrepresented students.

Chapter 5: The expansion of higher education and widening participation policy at three elite universities

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is organised into three sections. The first traces the expansion and subsequent stratification of higher education after the Second World War in all three jurisdictions. The second section explores the policies and strategies designed to widen participation as well as the measures of social characteristics in the US, England, and Scotland. The third section examines the ways in which three elite institutions (Great Lakes University, South Hadrian University, and Antonine University) applied national policy initiatives, engaged with government regulator regimes (in the case of the UK institutions), and created their own initiatives to support underrepresented students on their campuses. It is important to note that in the American jurisdiction there is overlap between the policies and the measures implemented. For instance, President John F. Kennedy introduced Affirmative Action into policy in 1961; however, it was not until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (within which Affirmative Action was included) that Affirmative Action became a programme to combat racial inequality and exclusion in the workforce and education system. This chapter argues that, although more individuals enter higher education than ever before, those from underrepresented backgrounds continue to attend less prestigious institutions, due to difficulties in tackling the larger, structural inequalities that create systemic inequalities within the wider education system. Furthermore, the chapter argues that policy does not always eliminate cultural barriers that constrain participation in higher education.

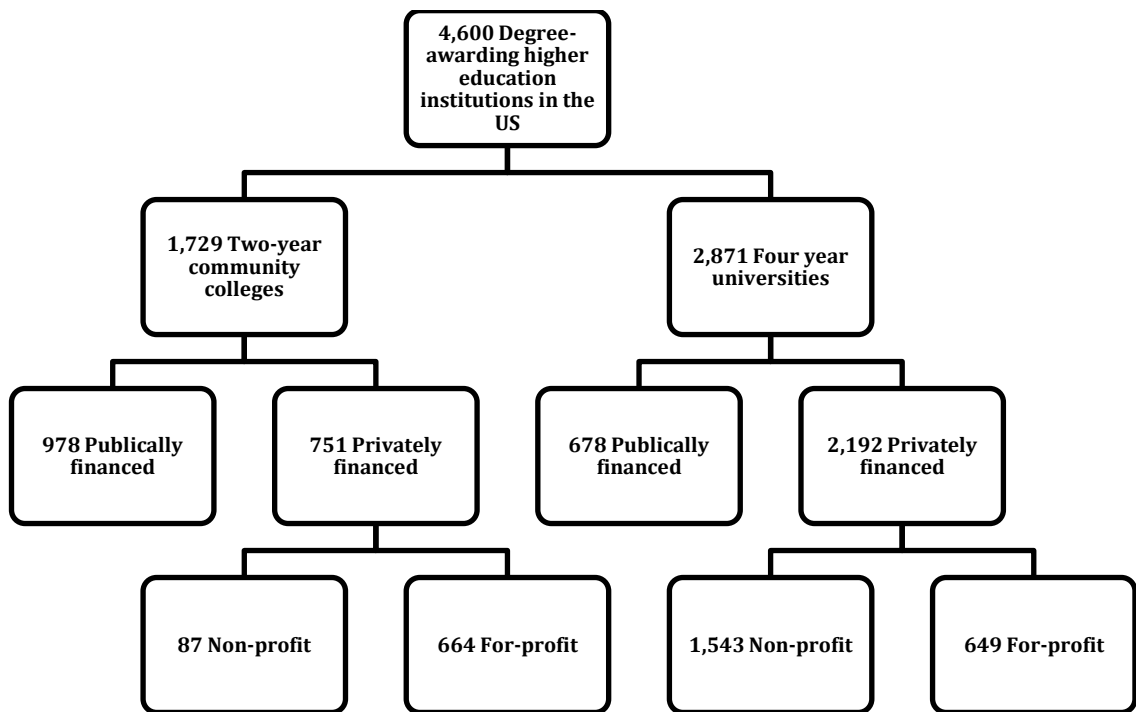
5.2 Expansion of higher education after the Second World War: US, England, and Scotland

This section traces the expansion of higher education in the US, England, and Scotland since the Second World War. All three jurisdictions have expanded their higher education systems in an attempt to create space to meet growing student demand and changing labour market requirements. The term 'expansion' refers to the shift in higher education from educating comparatively few elite students to a larger system designed to cater to a variety of educational needs (Morley, 1997). The expansion of higher education prompted discussions pertaining to the social characteristics of the student body, and whether enough was being done to attract students whose families had not traditionally benefitted from higher education. The term 'widening participation' is often used interchangeably with 'widening access', although the phrases have slightly different meanings. Widening participation generally refers to the increase in overall numbers, whereas widening access refers to the increase in students from underrepresented backgrounds. Overall, the higher education systems in the three jurisdictions (and the policy framework within which they operated) were a reflection of the social, economic, and political cultures of the time.

5.2.1 Expansion of the US system

The American higher education system is a stratified collection of institutions designed to provide educational experiences ranging from remedial academic preparation to postgraduate and professional degrees. Due to a federal system that values state governance, there is no countrywide education system or curriculum in the US. Therefore, education is based on a system wherein each state differs in its approach to education and financial policy (Allen, 2005, p. 5). In total, there are nearly 4,600 degree-awarding institutions in the US, all differing in size, affiliation, type, and mission (see figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 Breakdown of degree-granting institutions in the US



(Source: Snyder & Dillow, 2013, Table 5)

Prior to the end of the Second World War, the higher education system in America was expanding. Between 1938 and 1948 the number of university students doubled, though mostly as a result of the *GI Bill* in 1944, which awarded veterans scholarships to higher education. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, 1947 represented the peak of working-class, male access with veterans accounting for over 49% of university admissions. In 1947-48 the Veterans Administration paid fees for almost half of male university students (Smith & Bender, 2008). By 1962, higher education had received \$5.5 billion from the Veterans Administration, creating the conditions for expansion (Smith & Bender, 2008). It is important to note that the GI Bill mainly benefitted white veterans as higher education was divided along race lines with formal segregation in the south, and the active discouragement of black student participation in the north (Smith & Bender, 2008).

President Truman's *Commission on Higher Education* in tandem with the *GI Bill* marked a 'substantial shift in the nation's expectations about who should attend college' (Hutcheson, 2007, p. 107). Building upon *The Truman Commission of 1947, Title IV* (of the *Higher Education Act of 1965*) asserted that the benefit of higher education should be available to all eligible students, and introduced federal grants and loans targeting those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (US DoE, 2014; MacLachlan, 2012; Weaver-Hightower, 2009; Mumper, 2003). Because of the influx of new university students, the profession of Student Support Services (a programme still operating today) was introduced to university campuses.

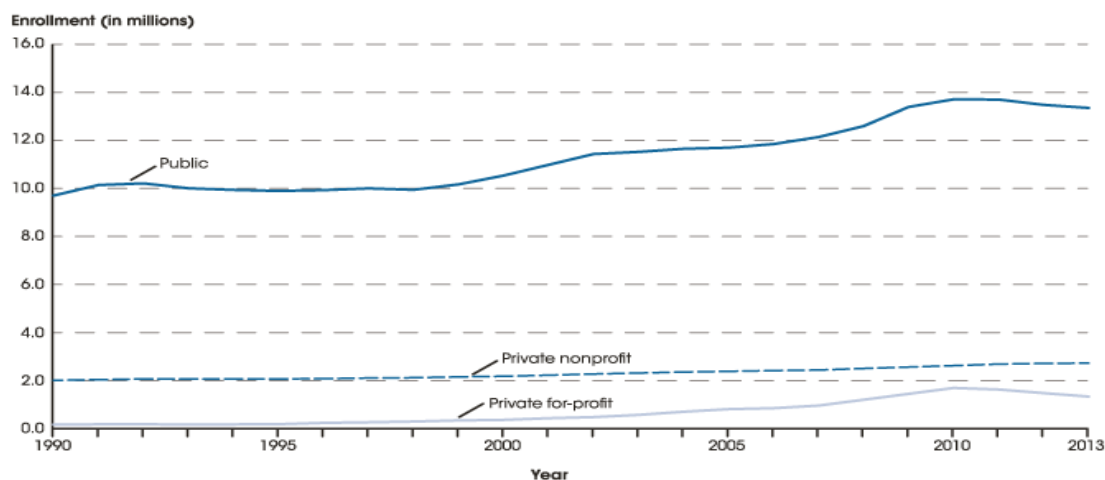
In the 1970s adult students began entering community colleges (see chapter 3). Some of the factors leading to this expansion included the desire to change careers and women looking for higher-paying jobs (Hutcheson, 2007). To accommodate this growing demand, higher education had to expand. Between 1960 and 1970, 521 new institutions were founded, mostly community colleges (Gumport & Pusser, 1997). By 1980, the flow of federal funds levelled off, causing universities to become more dependent on tuition fees as a source of revenue, resulting in fee increases.

The total enrolled undergraduate population has rapidly increased since the end of the Second World War. In 1945, 2 million students were enrolled in higher education, 2% of the age-eligible population. By 1954, 7% of 18 to 35 year olds were enrolled in higher education; by 1966 that percentage increased to 14%, and by 1980 participation was 18% of 18-35 year olds (U.S. Department of Commerce). In 1982 32.5% of high school graduates went on to college; in 1992 that figure rose to 41.4% (Hunt, 2008).

Figures 5.2 and 5.3 show enrolment in degree granting institutions, including both two-year and four-year institutions from 1990 to 2013. While figure 5.2

shows these changes in terms of institution type, figure 5.3 displays this increase broken down by different racial groups.¹

Figure 5.2 Total US undergraduate enrolment in degree-awarding higher education institutions (two- and four-year) by institutional type: 1990-2013

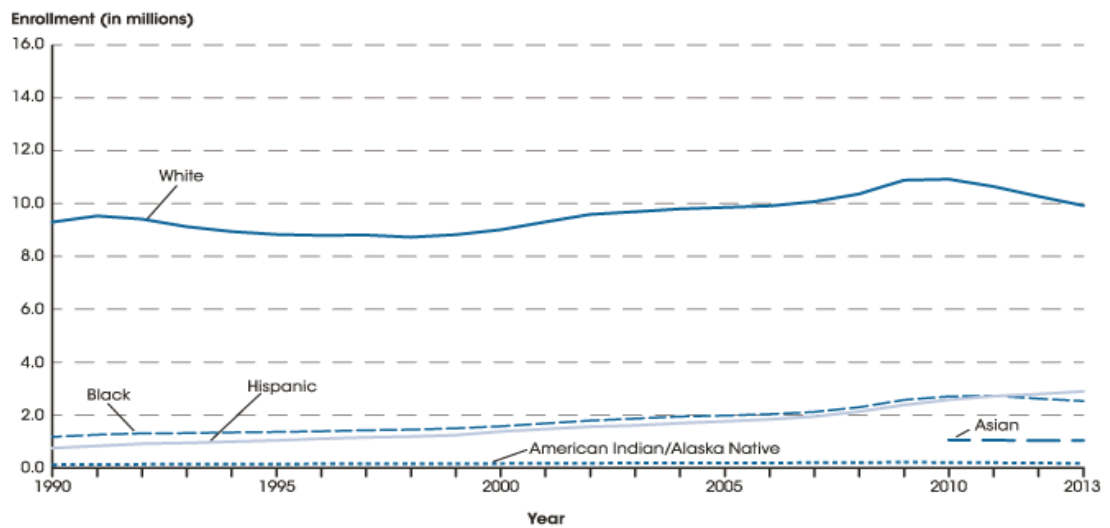


(Sources: Digest of Education Statistics, 2014, table 303.70 & Kena *et al.*, 2014)

The decrease in overall participation between 2010 and 2013 is most likely a result of several factors: a population decline leading to the decrease of the size of high school classes (leading to smaller pool of eligible university applicants), increased scrutiny of the for-profit sector, and a mix of economic factors (Kena *et al.*, 2014). In 2010 just 13% of US universities enrolled 10,000 (or more) students, and that 13% accounted for more than half (59%) of the total undergraduate enrolment nationwide. Of the five institutions with the highest enrolments, three are online, for-profit universities; none of these large institutions is elite as defined above. Although expansion in higher education represents a positive step in the efforts to widen participation, it does not always translate into students attending elite intuitions.

¹ Prior to 2010, separate data for those from Asian backgrounds was not available.

Figure 5.3 Total US undergraduate enrolment in degree-awarding higher education institutions (two- and four-year) by race: 1990-2013



(Sources: Digest of Education Statistics, 2014, table 306.10 & Kena *et al.*, 2014)

After the further organisation of state-wide institutions in the 1970s, the Department of Education began to focus on state-endowed institutions—known as land-grant institutions and universities that provided vocational degrees (NASULGC, 2008). As a land grant the university provided educational support to farmers and those residing in rural locations. Although many land-grant universities have now become large public institutions (like the University of Wisconsin, Madison or the University of California, Berkeley), community colleges continued to provide students with two-year Associate’s degrees or certificates (NASULGC, 2008). Those attending community colleges are more likely to be older, female, and from low-income families (Horn & Nevill, 2006). Motivations to study at community colleges are varied: workforce training, tuition cost, the open admission requirements, and access to remedial education in areas such as mathematics, writing, and English (See table 5.1, p. 125; Provasnik & Planty, 2008).

Historically, the most prestigious and elite universities in the US are private. These universities generally operate as non-profit educational organisations and rely heavily on their endowments, large individual bequests, and high

tuition fees. Many private institutions receive support in the form of public student loans and grants from the US government (Federal Student Aid, 2015b). Some private universities are considered liberal arts colleges because of the nature of their curriculum (such as Amherst in Massachusetts, or Pomona in California), some are religiously affiliated (such as Duke University or the University of Notre Dame), and others are directly operated by religious organisations (such as Brigham Young University). Private universities have generally smaller undergraduate enrolment (though Cornell University and The University of Pennsylvania are exceptions as both have more than 10,000 undergraduates), and tuition fees are the same whether the individual is domiciled in the state or not (US DoE, 2014). Table 5.1 provides several examples that demonstrate the different institutional classifications, degrees awarded, and average cost for full-time attendance not including housing or meals.

The American system provided places for almost 19 million people to take part in some form of higher education in Autumn 2014, though disparities in age, gender, and income exist across the higher education institutions. While the National Center for Education Statistics only provide raw numbers pertaining to total participation, it does offer greater clarity in participation percentages of 18 to 24 year olds. In 2012, for example 41% of 18 to 24 year olds were enrolled in some type of higher education institution (Snyder & Dillow, 2015). Both the experiences of, and disparities in, the expansion of higher education in the US also exist in the UK.

Table 5.1 Examples of the variety of midwestern² institutions, their classifications, awarding power, and average tuition fees

| Institution | Private/Public | Degrees awarded | Average fees for state-domiciled students per year | Average fees for out-of-state students per year |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|--|---|---|
| Two-Year Community College | Public | Associate's degree or certificate. Option of transferring to four-year institution | \$5,132 | \$12,116 |
| Two-Year Community College | Non-profit private | Associate's degree or certificate. Option of transferring to four-year institution | \$6,000-\$9,000 regardless of domicile ³ | |
| Two-Year Community College | For-profit private | Associate's degree or certificate. Option of transferring to four-year institution (limited options to transfer into public or private four-year institutions) | Base rate of: \$17,000 for Associate's degrees and diploma programmes, regardless of domicile | |
| Four-Year University | Public | Undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, academic certificates, and professional degrees | \$10,400 | \$23,600 |
| Four-Year University | Non-profit private | Undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, academic certificates, and professional degrees | \$35,720 regardless of domicile | |
| Four-Year University | For-profit private | Undergraduate and academic certificates | \$12,320 -\$19,000 (depending on course of study) regardless of domicile | |

(Data gathered from US DoE, 2014)

5.2.2 Expansion of the English system

As in the US, England experienced growth in both the numbers of institutions and participation rates after the Second World War and since then, there has been a belief in the connection between educational opportunity and opportunity for social mobility. Over the past 50 years, student participant

² See Glossary of terms and abbreviations.

³ The community college used as an example here charges \$250 per credit (full-time is 12-18 credits), so the cost is between \$3,000-\$4,500 per semester (\$6,000-\$9,000 annually), yet there are additional fees (such as the 'student fee', 'module fee', and 'graduation fee') that range from \$25.00 to \$720.00.

numbers have quadrupled: during the post-war years participation rates of school leavers hovered at 4% but by 1980 had reached 12% (Riddell, 2015). By the mid-1990s, 32% of 17 to 30 year-olds had experienced higher education in some form—that rate increased to 42% by 2005 (Riddell, 2015). Additionally, although expansion might dramatically increase the participation of middle-class students in elite universities, those from different social class backgrounds have seen their chances of accessing a prestigious university improve only slightly (Boliver, 2013). As expressed in chapter 2, Boliver contends that the expansion of higher education first allowed those in the middle class to reach the ‘saturation point’, the point at which everyone from the middle-class who wanted to enter higher education could. Only after this point was reached were individuals from under-represented backgrounds able to access highly selective institutions.

Published in 1963, The Robbins Report ‘reflected the belief that all who are qualified by ability and attainment should be entitled to a place in higher education, supported by a national system of grants’ (Riddell, 2015, p. 1). Expansion throughout the 1960s, and the abolition of the divide between the polytechnic institutions and universities in 1992, saw the number of universities increase from 47 to 85 as polytechnics were renamed and became universities (Wyness, 2010). Generally, polytechnics lacked degree-awarding powers prior to 1992, and concentrated on applied and vocational studies. As a result, they were seen as ranking below universities, and often had a high first-year dropout rate due to the lack of strict admissions guidelines. The expansion in higher education has meant a reorganisation of the overall system. Higher education institutions in England are divided into three overarching groups (Russell Group, Pre-1992, and Post-1992 institutions) based on prestige in research and staff, foundation date, and student body (Bennett, Ali-Choudhury & Savani, 2007). The Russell Group consists of 24 (16 in England) self-selected research-intensive universities. Pre-1992 universities were founded between the late nineteenth century and in 1980s. Post-1992 universities refer to universities that were created as a result of the *Further and Higher Education*

Act of 1992. The Act allowed polytechnics and central institutions (in Scotland) to become universities and award their own degrees. As in the US, expansion in England also led to stratification of institutions as well as the creation of new types of institutions.

Despite the addition of Post-1992 institutions and in an increasingly stratified and differentiated system, many universities turned to private sources of funding (through fees, endowments, and increasing private capital) to supplement their income from the state (Palfreyman & Tapper, 2014). Palfreyman and Tapper (2014) argued that since the Dearing Report (1997), the higher education system has become more hierarchical in character. All universities charge the same fees for courses, but the differentiation comes in the allocation of resources through research grants (HEFCE; SFC). Further reinforcing the stratification is the increase in higher education league tables drawing national and international comparisons. As in the US, stratification also exists between further education colleges and universities.

Further Education (FE) colleges in England provide Higher National Certificates and Diplomas (HNCs/HNDs) and other types of qualifications (Parry *et al.*, 2012). In England, 8% of higher education students (about 1 in 12 students) were taught in FE colleges in the 2009-2010 academic year (Parry *et al.*, 2012; Weedon, 2015). While government policies (starting with Dearing in 1997) have promoted the importance of further education there is little evidence of growth in the college-taught HE sector for several reasons—one of which was the ‘two sector structure and the organisation of the systems which was designed to keep HE and FE in separate structures’ (Parry *et al.*, 2012, p. 2). FE colleges contribute to widening participation and the inclusion of older, part-time students who have come from low participation schools or neighbourhoods (Parry *et al.*, 2012). Foundation Degrees represent one way that colleges and universities work together, though, FE colleges do not always provide a clear route into English universities, and often result in attending Post-1992 universities rather than elite institutions (Riddell, 2015). Moreover, England

delivers the majority of higher education programmes in universities rather than at the college level.

5.2.3 *Expansion of the Scottish system*

As in England, Scotland experienced a period of expansion in higher education institutions after the Second World War. In the 1960s there was an increase in participation rates to meet increasing student and labour market demands. From 1970 to 2000 the number of full-time undergraduates increased from 52,315 to 143,913, increasing further to 215,600 in 2013. (Paterson, 2003; Universities UK, 2015). Following the abolition of the divide between polytechnics (institutions controlled by local authorities) and universities in 1992, the Scottish government reorganised the polytechnic institutions (most changed their name once they gained university status) and created new formal systems for decision-making by removing further education colleges from local government control (Humes, 2013). The higher education sector in Scotland includes 19 institutions and several degree-awarding colleges. The universities are classified based on prestige, foundation date, and student body as Ancient, Pre-1992, and Post-1992 universities. Two Ancient universities are also classified as Russell Group institutions.

Also providing support in the expansion of higher education are further education colleges. Scotland's colleges have undergone their own expansion since the 1992 *Further and Higher Education Act* (Thomson, 2013). Scotland's colleges have recently undergone a reduction due to budget restrictions; the number of colleges decreased from 37 in 2011-12 to 20 in 2014-15 (Audit Scotland, 2015). Most students taking a higher education course in colleges will be on a Higher National Certificate/Diploma programme (Gallacher, 2006). Since 1992, colleges have moved away from providing 'technical' courses in light of the changes in the industrial landscape, and have moved towards a role similar to American community colleges by providing local communities with a range of 'learning opportunities' and 'access routes for adult returners' (Gallacher, 2006, p. 363). Scotland is also similar to the US in that colleges offer

another route into university. In particular, more than 50% of students on Higher National Diploma programme transfer into the third year of a degree, though generally this 'articulation' takes place at Post-1992 universities (Riddell, 2015). Ancient universities, however, admit relatively small numbers of students with HN qualifications. Additionally, these universities normally require students to begin in their first year, making the degree timescale lengthy, and potentially expensive (Riddell, 2015). While Scottish policy makers dictated that these two sectors create flexible routes from colleges to universities (this was again made clear in the *Post-16 Education Act*), these routes do not necessarily lead to elite universities. The decision of the Scottish Funding Council to 'base these articulation hubs on the Post 1992 universities emerged from the evidence that they were the ones which were already most actively involved with the colleges in providing progression routes' (Gallacher, 2014, p. 102). Consequently, the decision to concentrate funding on these institutions increased the likelihood that students would progress to the Post 1992 universities rather than elite institutions. In the 2011-12 academic year, only 9% of HNC/D students entered an Ancient university, while 70% entered Post-1992 universities (Gallacher, 2014).

Over the last forty years the landscape of higher education has transformed in all three jurisdictions in terms of the institutions available to students, the importance of institutional reputation, variations in financing education, and who constitutes a typical university student (David, 2007). In each jurisdiction, different groups of students have been either under or over-represented in specific types of institutions. The next section discusses the social characteristics of higher education students, and the particular categories used to delineate underrepresented groups.

5.3 Widening participation approaches and target groups

The previous section demonstrated how the higher education sector has grown since the Second World War. Discussions pertaining to sector growth have led to questions regarding who has been traditionally underrepresented in higher education (see chapter 2). To address exclusion, each government introduced different approaches to widen participation. Additionally, and particularly in the UK, each government has introduced measures to target and facilitate the inclusion of these groups. In the UK, in order to measure social class, the National Statistics-Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC), POLAR, and the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) are used, whereas the US uses measures of parental income.

5.3.1 Approaches to widen participation: US

When it comes to education policy, the US remains ‘a collection of 50 divergent systems’ (Baker, Sciarra & Farrie, 2012). Much of the current policy introduced to address widening participation stems from federal acts introduced in the 1960s. For instance, Affirmative Action was introduced into policy in 1961, and later re-introduced as part of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. The policy sought to give special consideration on the basis of race, sex, colour, ethnicity, or national origin. Most of the spotlight of Affirmative Action currently is centred on race. Yet, at its introduction ethnic minorities and women were limited to a relatively small number of jobs and offered few places in higher education (Holzer & Neumark, 2006). In the US, socioeconomic status and race are inextricably linked, since ethnic minorities often live in the most disadvantaged areas, attend the poorest schools, and have the fewest economic opportunities (Massey, Rothwell, & Domina, 2009). Due to the marginalisation of minority groups, individuals from poorer backgrounds are less likely to participate in higher education. The US has adopted several approaches to address academic inequity and prevent that inequity from being reflected in university acceptance, but Affirmative Action is the principle underpinning these policies (Leonardo, 2009).

Since its introduction, there has been a strong debate over the use of Affirmative Action as a means to widen university access (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009; Allen, 2005). Some states (California, Michigan, and Washington) have allowed voters to decide whether Affirmative Action should be allowed in public institutions. Since most American universities include ethnic background in contextual admission practices, many white, middle-class prospective students deem the practice (the use of ethnicity) unfair, as they feel their ethnic background and socioeconomic status hinders them from equal consideration and equal access (Harper & Griffith, 2011). Opposition to Affirmative Action is especially prevalent at highly selective institutions. In many ways, the debate over Affirmative Action is about accessing not only elite institutions but also elite socioeconomic positions in society (Harper & Griffith, 2011).

Another policy introduced in the 1960s was the Higher Educational Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 1965, which brought requirements for federal student financial aid and provided aid to institutions that served underrepresented communities. The Act has been re-authorised six times, most recently in 2008 (Cahalan, 2013). Also part of the HEOA was the introduction of Student Support Services to university campuses, an initiative that created pipelines into higher education and aimed to increase retention and graduation rates for underrepresented students. Student Academic Affairs (otherwise Student Support Services), it could be argued, is one of the most effective methods to closing the achievement gap (Cowan Pitre & Pitre, 2009) It works with pre-university students to establish a route into higher education and aims to ensure students are retained and graduate.

A third, and much more recent example of widening participation initiatives operates at the primary school level. To counter early disadvantage in schools, in 2001 President George W. Bush signed No Child Left Behind (NCLB) into law aiming to help primary and secondary school children by setting high academic standards (set by each state) and achievable goals so that each child has an

opportunity to receive a good education. NCLB was designed to target children with disabilities or low socioeconomic status, and it was to close the 'racial achievement gap' (U.S. DoE, 2014). The hope is that by closing the achievement gap in primary school, there will be a less pronounced social and racial gap in university attendance. The implementation of this programme, however, is highly controversial (Leonardo, 2009).

5.3.2 Widening participation targets: US

Unlike the situation in the UK, for US universities there are no benchmarks or third-party oversight bodies like the Scottish Funding Council or the Office for Fair Access. This is due to the autonomy of states and universities across the nation. Keeping universities accountable are public perception, public shaming, and the threat of lawsuits for universities failing to include underrepresented students.

To regulate participation, it is necessary to define and measure social characteristics. The US includes the following (in addition to racial minorities) as those likely to be considered underrepresented in higher education: first-generation, those from low-participation schools, students with disabilities, and those from lower socioeconomic status (US DoE, 2014). The measurement of whether an individual is considered underrepresented comes from an individual's socioeconomic status as recorded on tax documentation. The federal poverty level defines who is poor based on a family's annual income (rather than total wealth). The Department of Health and Human Services uses these poverty guidelines to determine who is eligible to receive federal subsidies or aid (including government grants such as the Pell grant). This determination (and eligibility) defines socioeconomic status for universities. Subsidies and grants are provided to households earning up to 150% of the poverty threshold. For instance, a family of four is considered in poverty with household earnings equal to or less than \$24,250, and subsidies and grants are awarded for those households earning up to \$36,375 (i.e. 150% of the threshold). In households with more or fewer members, \$4,160 is added or

subtracted per person from \$24,250 to determine whether a family would be placed on the poverty threshold. As students apply directly to a university, on each application a student will be asked to disclose their race/ethnicity, school attended, and family income. Other contextual admission criteria include personal statements, educational background, school location, and tax data to determine whether a student should be considered underrepresented. While current US policies and strategies to widen participation stem from legislation passed in the 1960s, in the UK, attempts to widen participation have taken place much more recently.

5.3.3 Approaches to widen participation: England

The UK continues to pass education policy legislation and despite policy allowing universities to raise their tuition fees; widening participation in higher education remains a top priority. Many of the approaches to widen participation are countrywide and are introduced by government bills. This legislation serves to guide universities and regulate university participation. The desire to increase the number of students participating in higher education to 50% by 2010 was the top priority of New Labour *White Paper* in 2003 (DfES, 2003). The *White Paper* provided universities with latitude by stating that ‘the basis for any discussion about widening participation and ensuring fair access must be that access should depend on academic ability’ (DfES, 2003, paragraph 0). *The Higher Education Act of 2004* ushered in the era of higher education institutions’ (in England, Wales, Northern Ireland) ability to charge higher fees for an undergraduate degree (David, 2012). Tuition fees of £1,000 have since increased to £9,000 (see chapter 3), and while the initial fees had exemptions for those from poor backgrounds, this is not the case today.

In 2010, several policies directly addressed widening participation. Riddell et al. wrote that Harris (2010) investigated widening access to elite universities and concluded that even ‘highly qualified students from disadvantaged backgrounds were less likely to apply to the most selective, research-led universities’ (Riddell et al., 2013, p. 20). Harris focused much of his report on England, but his

recommendations also applied to selective Scottish institutions. This report was important because a lot of effort had been placed behind establishing OFFA and creating strategic plans, and yet universities were less likely to include students from low socioeconomic backgrounds despite the policies and public bodies created. Simultaneously, the UK-wide *Equalities Act* of 2010 placed an obligation on the public sector (including HEFCE) to eliminate discrimination based on nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation—though there was no mention of poverty or social class background (HEFCE, 2014; Thomas & Linley, 2011, p. 2). As a result, universities across the UK now had to form equality schemes and action plans emphasising diversity and equality within their institutions.

Despite devolution, there are obvious policy overlaps between Scotland the rest of the UK (rUK), one being the 2010 *Equality Act* that applies across the UK. Yet, after devolution Scotland chose to maintain the policy of free tuition fees for Scottish-domiciled students studying in Scotland. Despite the lack of fees, Scotland's elite institutions continue to admit fewer poor students than do their newer university peers (Raffe & Croxford, 2015).

5.3.4 Widening participation targets: England

Since the Robbins Report in 1963, England has introduced measures to identify underrepresented students. The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) uses three measures to identify students from underrepresented backgrounds: number of entrants from state schools, socioeconomic status, and POLAR3 (which identify low participation neighbourhoods based on postcode data). There is a wide variation amongst institutions regarding the proportion of students from low participation backgrounds. Highly selective elite institutions such as the University of Oxford and The London School of Economics and Political Sciences admit 2.5 to 3% of their students from low participation backgrounds; Durham and Exeter have only a slightly better proportion at 4.9%. Institutions with moderate-to-inclusive admission policies, however, have a

much higher proportion of students from low participation backgrounds; for example at Sunderland University 22% of entrants fall into this category (Weedon, 2014, p. 16).

In 2002-03, the Office of National Statistics (ONS) replaced older methods of social class measurement with the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) (Weedon, 2014). NS-SEC specifically measures occupations and determines which individuals fall into groups 4-7 (low-income), whereas POLAR3 identifies neighbourhoods with the 20% lowest higher education participation rate (Riddell *et al.*, 2013). Together with other measures, such as free school meal entitlement, HESA and ONS provide information regarding which areas should be targeted for widening participation initiatives.

The Office for Fair Access (OFFA) was established under the terms of the 2004 Act, to ensure not only that universities continued their efforts to widening participation, but also that tuition fees did not deter individuals from entering higher education. OFFA's remit is to oversee all widening participation plans created by universities charging tuition fees and to ensure students from underrepresented backgrounds are still able to access a university education. The establishment of OFFA as an independent regulator of fair access is important, because for Labour to gain support for increasing fees, it had to create a regulatory body (HEFCE, 2013b). It is unclear, however, whether OFFA is autonomous from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). OFFA ensures that universities and colleges that charge full tuition fees have measures in place to widen participation. The main form of oversight is through the approval and monitoring of access agreements—widening participation plans created by universities pertaining to how they plan to attract students from underrepresented groups. The potential penalty for those who fail to meet their agreements is OFFA preventing the institution from charging full fees.

HEFCE takes on a national strategic role in higher education by developing a culture of widening participation at a national level (HEFCE, 2013a). There is some question as to the effectiveness of OFFA in regulating universities and likewise whether universities believe in OFFA's regulatory power. This question was addressed in the November 2015 Green Paper, *Fulfilling our Potential*, which announced that HEFCE and OFFA would be consolidated to create the Office for Students (OfS).

5.3.5 Approaches to widen participation: Scotland

Education in Scotland has always differed from elsewhere in the UK due to Scottish policy makers' placing emphasis on social and personal rather than economic goals, and policy-making remaining 'collaborative' rather than 'politicised' (Gallacher & Raffe, 2011, p. 469). Both the US and Scottish higher education structure are shaped by a four-year degree system. This results in England's three-year degree structure differing from the other two considered.

In 2004 the Scottish Further Education Funding Council (SFEFC) and the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) were replaced by one organisation, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), designed to provide funding to both colleges and universities. The combination of the two aimed for a more cohesive widening participation partnership (Weedon, 2014; Gallacher, 2006). The Funding Council works with the Commission on Widening Access and the Scottish Government in order to improve access for underrepresented students (SFC, 2012a, p. 1). The Funding Council also subsidizes initiatives, such as the Schools for Higher Education Programme (SHEP).

The decision by the Scottish National Party in 2011 to remove tuition fees for Scottish-domiciled students reinforced its separation from the rest of the UK, though Scotland will charge those students from the rest of the UK (rUK) up to £9,000 (Gallacher & Raffe, 2011). The Scottish Government introduced the *Post-16 Act* mandating that Scottish institutions must show effort to widen participation. Additionally the Act required each university to create strategic

outcome benchmarks—*Outcome Agreements* (Weedon, 2014). In December 2012, the SFC published guidelines for universities to focus on: extending opportunities for all by increasing the proportion of students entering Scottish universities from disadvantaged backgrounds; increasing the proportion of students from protected backgrounds (such as age, race, and disability); and working to support students from the above groups, and help them stay at university once they have gained a place (Weedon, 2014; SFC 2012a).

5.3.6 Widening participation targets: Scotland

There are a variety of reasons to promote widening participation, such as encouraging social mobility or promoting social justice. In Scotland, there are a range of groups that can be identified as underrepresented in higher education: those attending a low progression school or living in a low progression neighbourhood, those with low socioeconomic status, those receiving the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), first generation entrants, non-traditional adult learners, or those entering from non-traditional paths such as FE college. As in England, HESA uses the number of state school entrants and socioeconomic status of entrants to measure underrepresented students. However, while HESA in England uses POLAR3 to identify low participation neighbourhoods, Scotland uses the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). Unlike SIMD, POLAR3 groups neighbourhoods with regard to higher education participation. POLAR3 is not used in Scotland because of the high proportion of higher education that takes place in FE Colleges and the POLAR measurement misrepresents Scotland's institutions contribution to widening participation (HESA, PI definitions). National Statistics-Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) measures occupation and is derived from self-reported data collected by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).

Much attention is paid to SIMD because the Scottish Funding Council uses this measurement as a condition for awarding grant money to universities (SFC, 2012a). The SIMD ranks 6,505 data zones (each consisting of about 500-1,000 residents) and uses 38 indicators across 7 domains: income; employment;

health; education, skills, and training; housing; geographic access; and crime (SFC, 2013b, p. 8). The Scottish Funding Council ranks each zone, with the first 1 to 1,301 zones considered to be the 'most deprived' 20%, whereas zones 5,205-6,505 are the 'least deprived' 20% (SFC, 2013b, p. 8). As SIMD measures area, not individuals, it is a problematic measurement, for there may be individuals within a deprived locality who do not fit that classification (Universities Scotland, 2013). Objection to the use of SIMD has come mainly from Scottish universities.

While numbers show increased participation rates across the board, students from SIMD 20 (the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country) and 40 (the 40% most deprived neighbourhoods) are more often enrolled at Post-1992 Scottish institutions than Ancient universities (SFC, 2015, p. 47). Three of the four Ancient universities had SIMD 20 participation rates below 4.9%. Glasgow, the fourth Ancient university, located within a city with the highest proportion of people living in that quintile, had a SIMD 20 participation rate of 11.8% whereas the University of the West of Scotland had a rate of 23.8% (SFC, 2015, p. 47).

Newly created universities continue to enrol two-to-three times more students from the most deprived areas than other universities. Even the Open University—set up with the intention to widen participation across the UK—is enrolling fewer students from SIMD 20 than Abertay, Glasgow Caledonian, and the University of the West of Scotland. Of course, part of the explanation could be related to locality, as in these regions there are more individuals per capita from deprived areas than in other areas of Scotland. Nevertheless, as in England and the US, students from poor socioeconomic backgrounds are failing to access highly selective elite institutions. Elite universities take issue with the government's development of widening participation indicators (such as SIMD) because of how the universities perform. Overall, elite and ancient institutions, and those with a rural hinterland, do not have good outcomes in relation to participation rates measured by SIMD or POLAR.

Across the US and UK, while the exact characteristics of underrepresented individuals are different, the overall demographics are comparable. Those marginalised from higher education are predominately from low-income backgrounds, are ethnic minorities, first-generation, and from low participation schools and neighbourhoods. Although the demographics of those traditionally excluded from higher education are similar, each nation's history has contributed to vastly different policies designed to address widening participation. The final section of this chapter explores how three universities have applied widening participation policy, and the types of programmes and outcomes that have resulted.

5.4 Policies and programmes in the three case study universities

This section examines the ways in which three elite universities have applied national policy and institutional initiatives to include underrepresented students. It includes the perspectives of a Widening Participation Officer at each university.

5.4.1 Great Lakes University

The Great Lakes University System is one of the 'largest systems of public education in the country', educating over 180,000 students annually with 26 university campuses throughout the state, and employing over 40,000 individuals ([Great Lakes System], 2014a). The System consists of two universities awarding postgraduate and professional degrees, eleven four-year universities (all offering undergraduate and master's degrees), thirteen two-year colleges, and a Great Lakes Extension programme that allows state-wide access to university services ([Great Lakes System], n.d.). It has an annual budget of \$6.1 billion and awards more than 36,000 degrees annually ([Great Lakes System], 2014b). In autumn 2013, 197,828 students were enrolled in the system, and 31.5% of students who graduated from high school in this

midwestern state in 2012, enrolled at one of the GL System campuses in autumn 2012 ([Great Lakes System], 2014b, p. 2). The Great Lakes System uses federal and state census data to identify pockets of poverty by income area (defined either by voting wards or districts), much like POLAR3 or SIMD in the UK. A consistent issue across all three institutions was the identification of students solely based on neighbourhood or income area when doing so can mis-identify students as matching a widening participation profile when, in fact, they should not.

Current widening participation policy at Great Lakes stems from federal acts introduced in the 1960s e.g. the Higher Educational Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 1965, which contained requirements for Federal Student Financial Aid, introduced Student Support Services, and established TRIO⁴ (see sections above and chapter 3). Because this particular midwestern state has continued to rank below the national average of individuals 25 years and over with a bachelor's degree or higher (26% vs. 29%), the GL System created a series of initiatives to increase access and combat inequality ([Great Lakes System], 2014b). The initiatives aimed not only to recruit students, but also to retain them.

Great Lakes had three central initiatives aimed at attracting and enrolling underrepresented students: Plan 2008, pipeline programmes, and contextual admission. Following on a nationwide effort to widen participation, in 1998 the Great Lakes System designed a ten-year strategy named Plan 2008 to implement a diverse academic experience. Plan 2008 signified a large step towards diversifying its student body and adapting to the increasingly diverse population within its state. The first four of the seven goals of the plan addressed an overall effort to widen participation:

- 'Increase the number of high school graduates of color who apply, are accepted, and enroll at GL System institutions.

⁴ TRIO is not an acronym. It incorporates a trio of programmes: Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services.

- Encourage partnerships that build the educational pipeline by reaching children and their parents at an earlier age.
- Close the gap in educational achievement, by bringing retention and graduation rates for students of color in line with those of the student body as a whole.
- Increase the amount of financial aid available to [poor] students and reduce their reliance on loans' ([Great Lakes System Board of Regents], 1998, pp. 4-5).

Once the Plan was put in action, each institution in the GL System developed an individualised plan focusing on race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status at their own institution ([Great Lakes System], 2009, p. 2). Additionally, this plan was to adapt to the political climate of the wider United States. In June 2003, the US Supreme Court ruled on *Grutter vs. Bollinger* and *Gratz vs. Bollinger*, both reaffirming that institutions could use race as a 'plus' factor in admission decisions ([Great Lakes System], 2009). Since the Plan's implementation, enrolment of underrepresented students the Great Lakes System has risen from 11,967 to 18,021 and first-to-second year retention of underrepresented students increased (although a gap of 4.7% remains between white and minority ethnic students, and this figure does not address the overall four-, five-, and six-year graduation gap between white and minority ethnic students). Despite this plan, Great Lakes University continued to struggle with state-imposed financial shortfalls and a potentially negative campus *habitus* that strongly influenced the overall student experience ([Great Lakes System], 2009b, p. 4). Notwithstanding its initial success, Plan 2008 was not renewed. As an Assistant Dean put it,

We didn't pick up after Plan 2008. We didn't come up with another campus plan, which was ... [like] Inclusive Excellence, [a] great framework, a national framework—[instead] we rejected it (Interview with Assistant Dean, April 2014).

The Assistant Dean was asked his opinion as to why the university resisted renewing Plan 2008. He stated that

part of what happens with elite institutions ... is that there's this thought ... that because they are places that create knowledge, it's less likely to conform to national movements. There is sometimes a resistance to do those things that have the greatest impact on students. So that affects our ability to have the kind of implementation that can get deep at climate [and inclusion]. (Interview with Assistant Dean, April 2014).

His suggestion that elite universities are less likely to conform to larger, national movements is common across all three institutions. Smelser (1993) determined that, although elite universities have reacted to government demands with varying degrees of responsiveness, when universities felt that meritocracy and academic values were under attack, 'their role ... becomes one of a conservative elite, jealously guarding' their values (p. 40). Great Lakes understood its core purpose as achieving academic excellence, not to widen participation. This divergence results in elite universities being less willing to conform to national movements.

Although Great Lakes selected not to renew this national initiative, it embraced other, pipeline programmes designed to raise aspirations of underrepresented students. Altogether, the university has eight pipeline programmes, one of which is TRIO. TRIO is an educational outreach umbrella programme that identifies and serves those from low-income, first generation, and disadvantaged backgrounds (US DoE, Federal TRIO Programs). TRIO targets students around the age of twelve, and creates an academic pipeline to ensure students traditionally excluded from higher education have the opportunity to access it. The university had to apply and compete for federal TRIO funding, and it was granted funding in 1993. This funding is still ongoing. Since TRIO participation was capped at around 100 participants per academic year due to the limited finances provided by the government, Great Lakes expanded its pipeline initiatives to include additional state-funded enrichment programmes to serve underrepresented students. These programme offices combine

academic enrichment prior to university, while providing holistic support during the academic year. Together the eight pipeline programmes serve about 10% of the total undergraduate population.

One practice shared amongst all three institutions was the use of a holistic review process. As addressed in chapter 3, this practice aimed to give less weight to standardised measures of success and more to evaluating a student's background. The Assistant Dean believed that contextual admission was one avenue to ensure a fairer review:

part of holistic review is about shaping your class around the kind of thinkers, the kind of engagement you want in your classroom. That has nothing to do with class rank. [It] has nothing to do with SAT scores. It's about who is going to contribute to the richness of your mission (Interview with Assistant Dean, April 2014).

One central difference between Great Lakes and the UK universities, South Hadrian and Antonine, was the latter's use of government targets in admission—targets in the US are in fact illegal (US Department of Labor, Executive Order 11246). Yet, Affirmative Action sought to give special consideration to those on the basis of race, sex, colour, ethnicity, and national origin. Great Lakes implemented Affirmative Action to ensure that the institution (minimally) reflected the state's population. A strong debate continues, however, over the use of Affirmative Action as a means to widen university access (Harper *et al.*, 2009; Allen, 2005). The practices of the Office of Admissions at Great Lakes were difficult to ascertain, as the department was unwilling to comment on its procedures. Data from the Academic Planning and Institutional Research Group reported that in 2012, 5,715 first-year undergraduate students were admitted, and 564 had an underrepresented classification. Underrepresented students thus equated to 9.8% of the total first-year students at Great Lakes ([Great Lakes] University, 2014). In this midwestern state, 87% of the population was classified as white. An argument could be made that the university was roughly 3% short of parity between its state and university population of minorities.

In addition to raising aspirations through pipeline programmes and the use of contextual admission, another avenue to widen participation at Great Lakes addressed the student experience. The Assistant Dean talked at length about the importance of Student Academic Affairs (SAA) and its role in promoting a positive campus climate. At Great Lakes, SAA was one of primary avenues for widening participation. SAA primarily focuses on academic advising services, career services, financial aid and scholarships, and undergraduate research. The Assistant Dean explained why he viewed SAA as important:

majority students are moving pebbles (versus students of color who mov[e] large boulders), because of the way they easily navigate the climate. Whereas it takes multiple levels and layers of resources to get one student of color through an institution this size (Interview with Assistant Dean, April 2014).

Harper and Quaye (2009) define campus climate as something that might seem intangible, but it can have an overwhelming impact on the student experience and overall retention. So, while Great Lakes tried to raise aspirations and provide support to underrepresented students, the university struggles to address the campus *habitus* and issues surrounding a lack of belonging. The Assistant Dean argued that this was the central problem facing the efforts to widen participation. He offered examples of the questions that many administrative and academic staff ask underrepresented students: ‘why don’t you go to football games? Why don’t you go to basketball games? Why aren’t you singing the (university) song?’ He believed that staff often do not realise how climate and culture are inherently linked to middle-class tradition (Interview with Assistant Dean, April 2014; supported by evidence from Wilkins & Burke, 2015; Ball & Vincent, 2001; Butler, 2010). The administrator acknowledged one particular issue at Great Lakes involved

a lot of nostalgia around the [university] brand. And [the brand] was constructed for middle-class, upper-middle-class, white communities. A lot of the traditions are built on that. So when you ask how do people feel about this, you know, sing [the university song] a lot of these things are

built on traditions that aren't linked to students who come from diverse communities (Interview with Assistant Dean, April 2014).

While the traditions represent one branch of possible exclusion, underrepresented students were confronted with questions pertaining to their ability to fit in when visiting on an open day. The administrator recounted:

I saw the [student representatives] doing tours—about 15—and they were all white. And I thought to myself 'that's the problem'. Part of it is the way [campus staff] recruit, so part of the issue that we have here, is everything we do is done through a cultural lens of a majority student. Even in marketing. We do it all the time. But part of connecting students of color into these things, you almost have to recruit like actively engage, pull, it's a contact kind of engagement (Interview with Assistant Dean, April 2014).

It is important to consider Butler's (2015) argument that universities fail to recognise how whiteness and middle-class norms organise everything. The Assistant Dean reported that he was from a poor socioeconomic community in the Midwest of America. He identified as an African American male. He, because of his own cultural identity, recognised how class and racial norms shaped the campus climate. Constructions of social class and race perpetuate stereotypes and exclude those in the minority. By establishing boundaries (for instance singing a university fight song to which only middle-class, white students relate), it is more difficult for underrepresented populations to participate, and ensures majority control (Anthias, 2005). Since the majority of staff and students at Great Lakes were white, it was difficult for a university, situated in a state 87% white, to understand anything other than a white experience. This lack of cultural understanding is one reason why social and cultural barriers persist.

5.4.2 South Hadrian University

This section will review South Hadrian's access statements, programmes designed to widen participation, and *habitus*. The English Indices of Deprivation 2010 reported that the North East, North West, and London have the largest proportion of the most deprived populations (Communities & Local

Government, 2011). The North has the lowest participation rate for traditional students in England, at just 29.4%, compared to the national average of 34.2% (HEFCE, 2012b). Of those who received free school meals at the age of 15, only 10% in the county where South Hadrian is located entered some form of higher education at the age of 19 (BIS, 2011b, p. 6). According to OFFA's 'Trends in young participation by student background and selectivity of institution' report, a young person from the most advantaged socioeconomic group is 6.3 times more likely to study at a highly selective university than a person from the two most disadvantaged quintiles. Although situated in a deprived county in the north, South Hadrian University's percentage of widening participation students remains below sector average. According to 2015/16 Access Agreements, at South Hadrian 63.4% of its population are state school educated, 5.1% are from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3), and 12.5% were identified as entrants from NS-SEC 4-7 (though this percentage includes both UK or EU domiciled students) ([South Hadrian] University, Access Agreement 2015/16). It is important to note that BIS uses sector-adjusted averages to compare universities and ascertain whether they are meeting the expected outcomes. South Hadrian was 7% below the NS-SEC sector average.

South Hadrian has released its strategic plan and policies pertaining to access and diversity. This included the *2010-2020 Strategy* explaining its desire for excellence in research and education. Many aims featured in the statement revolved around increasing their UK and global rankings in research. The university also sought to 'attract and admit the most able and motivated students with the greatest potential to contribute to, and to benefit from, the education we provide, irrespective of their background' (Strategy 2010-2020, n.d., p. 16). While there was mention of developing and growing the university with an effort to be sensitive to the surrounding city and people, there was no explicit mention of access for underrepresented students (Strategy 2010-2020, n.d.). When asked about the absence of widening participation in the Strategic Plan, the Head of Access confirmed that despite the fact that widening participation was absent from the Strategic Plan, a separate document, *Policy on*

Diversity and Equality, published in 2007 expressed the university's values relating to widening participation (Interview with Head of Access, South Hadrian, 2014). In the latter document, South Hadrian states, 'we are fully committed to eliminating discrimination and actively promoting equality of opportunity for all of our staff and students' ([South Hadrian] University, March 2007, p. 1).

South Hadrian established its own access targets in relation to NS-SEC in order to meet government access requirements and be able to charge £9,000 in fees. In March 2016, OFFA released data from monitoring access agreements in 2014-15. Of the eight targets set by South Hadrian, the university failed to meet or exceed all eight, but was 'on course' to meet seven and 'progress' was being made on the other target.

Although many Russell Group universities fail to meet their targets, OFFA has yet to punish any university (Schuetze & Slowey, 2002; Boliver, 2013). The Head of Access at South Hadrian expressed that he felt that the university was playing a rather dangerous game:

OFFA do have it within their wheelhouse to be really damaging to [South Hadrian]. At the moment it doesn't seem like they have an appetite to do that, but you know if that were to come to pass, [and] there came a time when they wanted to pick someone to make an example, it would be us (Interview with Head of Access, South Hadrian, 2014).

The 2015 Green Paper cited the 'continuing reluctance of elite universities to take in more students from disadvantaged backgrounds' and weaknesses in the regulatory system (BIS, 2015). To remedy these problems, the government proposed the establishment of the Office for Students (OfS)—a merger of OFFA and HEFCE (BIS, 2015). It was unclear whether these new proposed measures will affect how South Hadrian measures underrepresented students, and if they could force the university to use government mandated measurements. It is unclear why OFFA fails to hold Russell Group universities accountable. It could be argued that universities within the Russell Group have substantial power

over the sector due to their prestige; as a result, the government walks a fine line between encouraging (and pressuring) Russell Group institutions to widen participation without alienating them. Another argument could be made that the amount of international students and large research grants secured by Russell Group institutions allow them to be to some extent economically autonomous from the government control.

The Head of Access expressed that the POLAR2 measure was '*inaccurate and laborious*', and for that reason the university replaced POLAR3 with ACORN. ACORN focuses on categorised, geodemographic classifications and lifestyle information (remarkably similar to SIMD). The rationale given for adopting ACORN was that overall 'it's easier [for someone] to move job than it is to move house', and, therefore, employment information was not as reliable (Higher Education Academy, n.d., p. 14). It is important to highlight the different measurements used by the government and South Hadrian. The difference in measurement would identify different characteristics, which would lead to discrepancies in who could be characterised as underrepresented. Also, the measures would lead to incomparable data outcomes. Reviewing the literature and policies published by South Hadrian, it seems that the university finds the government measures unreliable, but the argument of unreliability may stem from this university's not fairing well in relation to these statistics.

When asked whether the university was fearful of a target shortfall for academic year 2013-14, the Administrator responded,

OFFA is a funny one because [Professor Les Ebdon⁵] has to act tough, but at the same time he's got to work with universities. So, publically, he's got to go to ministers and say '[this] university isn't quite socially diverse enough, but I'm on their case'. At the same [time] if he starts making lots of public statements about how terrible we [the university] are then it's going to get our backs up ... the three worst offenders are us, Oxford and Cambridge. Oxford and Cambridge are bullet proof. You can't touch them. You couldn't. It would be pointless to (Interview with Head of Access, South Hadrian,

⁵ Director of Fair Access to Higher Education; Head of the OFFA.

2014).

The Head of Access seemed resigned to the idea that OFFA could sanction the university if it failed to present any public indication that widening participation was a priority. Searching for information relating to the widening access team on the university website has proved challenging, as no mention of the team or access initiatives could be found without great effort. Furthermore, widening participation continued to be absent from South Hadrian's strategic plans and present only in the *Policy on Diversity and Equality*.

The Widening Participation Office at South Hadrian focuses most of its efforts on raising the aspirations of underrepresented students. More specifically, university recruitment was 'very targeted', going 'to schools where we know we'll get students' (Interview with Head of Access, South Hadrian, 2014). This university's mission was in fact to target only high achievers:

Everything we do is about getting students into the university. So when we say access and widening participation, that's still widening participation to [this university]. Other universities are doing it for the social good ... we're very much widening access to [South Hadrian]. We work with students who have a chance of getting in, that's basically where we lay our hat (Interview Head of Access, South Hadrian, 2014).

During the interview, the Head of Access distinguished between universities that widen participation for the 'social good' and his own. He felt that South Hadrian saw its role to widen participation as a government requirement, and was very 'targeted' in the students it selected. To select widening participation students, the university relied on two pipeline programmes: Sutton Trust Summer School (a nationwide programme that replaced the National Gifted and Talented Summer School) and Supported Progression. In their access agreement with OFFA for 2014-15, the university featured Supported Progression as a cornerstone to access in that it 'provides a progression route for a targeted cohort of the most able, but least likely to apply students from the North and Cumbria' (p. 1). The Head of Access indicated that Supported

Progression was the university's flagship (and linchpin) widening participation activity—and he had created it 'in the space of a half an hour for a meeting' (Interview with Head of Access, South Hadrian, 2014). Supported Progression is a series of intensive, academic activities that aim to increase applicants from state schools, low participation neighbourhoods, and ACORN categories 4 and 5 ([South Hadrian] University Access Agreement 2016/17). Individuals begin in Year 12, continuing in Year 13 to university registration. Eligible participants must meet the following criteria: first-generation; achieved at least 5 As or A*s at GCSE or equivalent; taking subjects in relation to the subject stream for which they are applying; attend schools or colleges with a low overall GCSE and/or A-Level, Higher/Advanced Higher (or equivalent) point score and/or schools or colleges with low progression rates to higher education; come from neighbourhoods with low overall progression rates to higher education or high levels of socioeconomic deprivation ([South Hadrian] University Access Agreement 2016/17).

By completing the programme, an applicant's prior test scores of ABB would be seen by admissions as AAA. The target for 2014-2015 was to enrol 90 Supported Progression students. In their 2016-17 Access Report, South Hadrian reported that they enrolled 95 Supported Progression students into the university—exceeding their goal by 5.

To participate in the Sutton Trust Summer School, students must show that they are academically able, have a minimum of 5 AA* on GCSE, come from an area of social deprivation (as measured by ACORN—not NS-SEC—per South Hadrian's criteria), and be first-generation (Interview with Head of Access, South Hadrian, 2014). Sutton Trust applicants are admitted directly by the programme whereas the university's central admissions office controls Supported Progression.

Since programmes like Supported Progression and Sutton Trust offered students at South Hadrian the experience of spending time at the university

prior to acceptance, the Head of Access felt that underrepresented students would not experience culture shock. In fact,

to some extent I think they're better than the standard fresher who turns up. They know the university, they've spent time at college, they know how it works; they've spent time at the facilities. They have their peer group with them (Interview with Head of Access, South Hadrian, 2014).

Yet, while the Head of Access thought that underrepresented students did not experience culture shock, he did not deny South Hadrian's wealthy, independent school, southern reputation. He reported an experience he felt was an exception:

one girl was plopped into a very upper-middle class ... structure and found [her peers] to be a bit snobby and uncaring. That was kind of [South Hadrian] at it's worst. So that, if you like, was culture shock, but I think that's fairly rare (Interview with Head of Access, South Hadrian, 2014).

To welcome students who have come from the Supported Progression route to South Hadrian, the programme was

going to do a big private function and say welcome to the university and have a cheese and wine party (Interview with Head of Access, South Hadrian, 2014).

Those plans were abandoned, however, due to the worry of identifying the students. Furthermore, when the first cohort of Supported Progression were graduating from South Hadrian, the Widening Participation Office wanted to throw a party,

a big champagne and strawberries garden party ... but we pulled back from that, but then we felt, like, well, that's a bit like us taking credit for their achievement (Interview with Head of Access, South Hadrian, 2014).

Ironically, the administrator told these stories to support his belief that underrepresented students did not experience culture shock and generally fit in with the campus *habitus*. And yet, wine and cheese and champagne and strawberries conjure images of a certain demographic of people, a certain

culture. As will be found in chapters 7 and 8, the South Hadrian students all mentioned the wine and cheese parties as a source of difference between their cultural background and their peers'. This difference supports Butler's (2015) claim that universities fail to recognise how middle-class norms organise everything.

5.4.3 Antonine University

This section will trace the policies and programmes at Antonine aimed to widen participation, as well as identify the university *habitus* from the perspective of the Head of Widening Participation. 4,033 first-year students were enrolled in academic year 2010-11. Of the 4,033, 57.7% were female, and only 6.3% were members of an ethnic minority (BME) ([Internal Governance Report], 2012). The Scottish Funding Council reported that, in 2011-12, 12.3% of the Scottish-domiciled university entrants were from the 20% most deprived SIMD quintile (SFC, 2014). The Antonine University Governance Team reported that in the same academic year 359 of 4,033 students in the incoming undergraduate class were from SIMD 20 and SIMD 40 quintiles combined—a little less than 9% of the student intake ([Internal Governance Report], 2012).

The Post-16 Bill, introduced in 2012 and passed in 2013, placed considerable weight on widening participation and placed the burden of recruiting and retaining more disadvantaged students on universities (Croxford *et al.*, 2014). The Bill incited initial worry at Antonine that it directly targeted the university. The Head of Widening Participation felt that this bill was, '*out to punish*' the university (Interview with Head of Widening Participation, 2014). As a result, those from the university governance committee lobbied hard to change the wording of the bill. This resulted in several points (pertaining to universities and widening participation) being amended. In section 3 (pertaining to widening participation), 9B section 3-5, the wording changed from 'actions specified by the Council' to 'an agreement between a higher education institution and the Council' (Passage of the Post-16 Education, 2012, p. 4; Post-

16 Education, 2013, p. 4). Thus, the situation became more of a partnership rather than the government's dictating the terms of widening participation.

In 2014-15, 55% of the Scottish-domiciled entrants at Antonine had at least one of the characteristics that (to Antonine) identified widening participation students ([Antonine University], n.d., Outcome Agreement Update, 2015-16). The characteristics included the following: first generation; low socioeconomic groups; low participation neighbourhoods or schools; mature students from the above groups; looked after/accommodated children or care leavers. The Scottish Funding Council, however, only recognised 6% of the 55% as having the SIMD 20/40 characteristics ([Internal Governance Report], 2012; [Internal Governance Report], 2015, p. 5; SFC, 2015, p. 47). The objection to the use of SIMD came mainly from Ancient universities as SIMD measures area, not individuals. According to the university, the measurement was considered problematic, as there may be individuals within a deprived locality who do not fit that classification (Universities Scotland, 2013). There is a lot of evidence that point to the inaccuracy of the SIMD measure (Weedon, 2014; Riddell *et al.*, 2013; Universities Scotland, 2013). Yet, much like the case of South Hadrian, elite institutions across the UK consistently underperform in their widening participation assessments (Espenshade & Radford, 2009). As Riddell *et al.* (2013) argue, just as there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution to the multiplicity of factors that hinder an individual's academic progress, there also is no single measure (whether SIMD or NS-SEC) that can be used singlehandedly to identify and target underrepresented students. Antonine, therefore, selects to use a wide variety of characteristics to identify underrepresented populations.

The university predominately focuses on creating a strategic pipeline for first-generation students from low progression schools or neighbourhoods. While the focus on widening participation has increased in the UK in the last decade, the creation of pipeline programmes was not a new idea in Scotland (Croxford *et al.*, 2014). Since 1988, Antonine has supported regional and national partnership projects to widen participation. In 1988, the first pipeline

programme was established: The Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP). Initially SWAP was a collaborative effort among local authorities, further education colleges, and universities (including Antonine) that focused on vocational education and aimed to promote wider participation (Osborne, 2013). The decision by Antonine to promote SWAP as a means of widening access stemmed from the desire to improve social justice and opportunity in higher education (Osborne, 2013). This suggests that Scottish universities, including Antonine, were concerned with access and inclusion prior to government mandates.

A second university-preparation programme, JUMPS was formed in 1995⁶. It partnered with higher education institutions (including Antonine) and included support from local councils. In total, Antonine admitted 350 JUMPS students in 2013-2014, and 400 were admitted the following year. In September 2010, the Scottish Funding Council brought four regionally focused programmes (including JUMPS) together under one umbrella named the Schools for Higher Education Programme (SHEP). Each programme's objective was to support the academic potential of young people (S3-S6). Since 1995, JUMPS has grown to support 59 state secondary schools. Of the nearly 2,000 students involved over the last 20 years, over 60% have continued to university and a further 25% have enrolled in college (Universities Scotland, 2012, p. 4). According to the measurements used by the university, admitting pipeline programme participants was synonymous with admitting underrepresented students.

Contextual admissions have been used since 2004, and have allowed Antonine to take into account additional data and make university entry more socially inclusive (Croxford *et al.*, 2013). Students with indicators (such as first-generation, from low progression schools, participation in a recognised access programme, areas of relative deprivation as defined by SIMD, or ACORN data, and serious educational disruption) could be given special consideration. Since

⁶ The access programme's name is altered here to preserve confidentiality.

2004, additional categories were introduced; however, ethnicity, gender, parental occupation, and prior school attended (state versus independent) are not part of the criteria (Riddell *et al.*, 2013, p. 49). The changes to the admission process were designed to create a wider base of applicants, as some of the existing indicators based on geography and postcode (SIMD) often misidentified students. This misidentification (or mis-match) caused a ‘mis-measure’—identified by student record analysis—revealing a high proportion of students, identified as underrepresented through the use of postcode data, in fact came from a high social-class background (Croxford *et al.*, 2013, p. 12). Antonine made changes in its admission processes and enrichment activities. It was clear from the data that Antonine was invested in raising aspirations and widening participation. Yet, the altering of government targets and replacing them with alternatives again demonstrates the power that large elite research universities have in dictating the terms of their own admissions. Furthermore, it demonstrates how the university system is stratified.

Antonine University has invested in resources and staffing to develop the student services needed to enhance the student experience for all. The university has academic centres focusing specifically on pre-law, pre-health and STEM field advising. Additionally it has created programmes like Pathways to the Professions and the REACH initiatives to provide advice and guidance to individuals interested in high-demand professions, such as medicine, law, veterinary medicine, and architecture. Despite these initiatives, the Head of Widening Participation admitted that wider university culture had not been addressed by these initiatives.

When asked whether she thought underrepresented students identified with the university *habitus*, the Head commented that ‘*they way people dress [or act] might be different, but we have to try and see that as a win/win*’. In other words, she believed that there were benefits in exposing both majority and underrepresented students to each other. Yet, as will be discussed in chapter 8, it is clear that it was not a win/win for the underrepresented students

interviewed, as they expressed feeling out of place. To combat this problem, the Head of Widening Participation believed that students needed to have ‘resilience’:

there’s such a lack of confidence of students in first and second year especially if they’re from a working-class background. It’s probably been pounded into you, and maybe you are less likely to speak up. So it’s confidence. What we have to say is you must have resilience because you are going to meet people from a wide range of backgrounds, far more than you would where you come from—and that’s fine, but, here, take the opportunities (Follow-up Interview with Head of Widening Participation, 2015).

It is important to note that the Head of Widening Participation made a point to mention that she was from a working-class background. The notion of instilling resilience in underrepresented students could be shaped by the administrator’s own social class, race, and cultural identity (Wilkins & Burke 2015). Arguably one of the most important advancements at Antonine was the new approach of being open to widening participation students about their classification. Prior to 2015, the Head of Widening Participation explained:

we have post-offer visits, so [we had] lunches put on and we did an interactive careers workshop, and previously people with WP tags [would be invited] and they would come with friends who weren’t invited and say, ‘well, why have you not been invited?’ So this year we’re being more upfront and saying to students, ‘are you happy to talk about your background and projects’, and I think we need those stories out there. So this year we emailed them and said, ‘you are being invited because you came through one of our projects, you’re [access programme] eligible, or you live in a Scottish zone where not many people are going to uni’. We got treble the number coming. I think you have to be honest and I think you have to make people proud of what they’re doing (Follow-up Interview with Head of Widening Participation, 2015).

Complex issues such as choice, identity, empowerment, achievement, and belonging are often abridged in (if not outright excluded from) government and institutional initiatives (Wilkins & Burke, 2015). As expressed in chapter 2, universities often fail to recognise that middle-class traditions shape their culture. The Head of Widening Participation at Antonine made a point to

address the invisibility of the underrepresented population. In contrast to the situation in the US, widening participation students in the UK are largely invisible as they are not identified or flagged. By acknowledging that part of the student population at Antonine were from widening participation, the Widening Participation Office at Antonine was trying to move beyond the worry of stigmatisation and look toward making underrepresented students feel that they have a place at their university.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided insight into the expansion of higher education as well as the policies and measures used to widen participation. It has also highlighted how three universities applied policy to create initiatives. England and Scotland differ in how widening access is regulated and what indicators are used, whereas the US does not have any regulatory structure for widening access. Overall, the US, England, and Scotland have many more similarities than differences in the effort to widen participation. The expansion to higher education in each jurisdiction did not sufficiently eliminate participation inequality (Schuetze & Slowey, 2002; Boliver, 2013). Specifically, while policies have increased participation, they have failed to acknowledge the systemic social and cultural barriers that affect higher education participation. This suggests that the barriers to higher education are not just about students' resources, but also about universities' priorities and *habitus* (Moore *et al.*, 2013).

In terms of jurisdictional initiatives, individuals from less socially advantaged backgrounds are more likely to enter community colleges or less-selective institutions—this raises the question of whether this route should be counted as inclusion at all. Although there are more similarities than differences, there still are differences in the structure of higher education and the methods used to widen participation across the three jurisdictions. Generally, the US has a much more varied higher education structure, including a mixture of over 4,600

institutions providing two- or four-year degrees, all with public, private, or for-profit classifications. Social class differences in educational attainment and choice are the most prominent factors that affect social class differences in university participation in both the US and the UK. Additionally, socioeconomic status and race are inextricably linked in the US; ethnic minorities are more likely to attend the poorest schools and have fewer economic (and academic) opportunities. Put simply, social class and race compound educational choice and advantage. Race is also an issue in the UK, with some minority ethnic groups (such as Afro-Caribbean groups) doing poorly in school and in university admissions. Asian pupils, however, particularly those of Indian heritage, do very well in both the US and UK (See *et al.*, 2012). Government policies and institutional initiatives, despite the best of intentions, constitute only part of the larger structures and issues at play when considering widening participation to higher education. This thesis now moves beyond policy to three main findings chapters (6, 7, and 8) to explain how each form of capital (economic, social, and cultural) affects the student experience.

Chapter 6: Economic capital and the experiences of widening participation students

6.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights how a student's economic capital and the finances associated with higher education attendance (such as loans, grants, bursaries, and scholarships) affect the student experience at three elite universities: Great Lakes, South Hadrian, and Antonine. Chapter 3 introduced differences in the financial structures, tuition fees, and maintenance costs, as well as the financial measures used in widening participation initiatives across all three institutions. This chapter will trace how, within each jurisdiction, a family's economic capital, attitudes to debt, and part-time employment affect the student experience.

6.2 Economic capital: Great Lakes University

I'm thinking about money the whole day, every day, when [I] wake up, when [I] go to sleep ... In class ... I find myself while taking notes doing math calculations [on the side of my notebook] [to] figure out how much I can spend ... adding in rent and food and all these things. I am like 'what I am left with and how much do I need to make up?' (Jessica, 21, Mexican).

This section highlights the feelings of Great Lakes participants in relation to the impact of family economic capital, attitudes to debt, and part-time employment. Table 6.1 provides an overview of all twelve participants along with their total anticipated debt after university, debt anxiety, and employment. The participants were asked to assess their debt anxiety on a scale from 1 to 5: 1 being not worried, 5 being extremely worried. The anxiety recorded below reflects the levels of anxiety the participants self-reported on their information form. Those listed as receiving 'free tuition' in table 6.1 were participants in one particular university-funded pipeline-to-university programme that covered the tuition fees for its participants.

Between 2001 and 2012 the cost of attending a public university in the US increased by 40% nationally (Snyder & Dillow, 2013). Generally, while the Pell grant (see chapter 3) was seen as the centrepiece of funding, frequently the Great Lakes System relied heavily on the Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant (SEOG), Federal Work-Study (FWS), and Perkins Loan programmes. There are about 182,000 students in the Great Lakes System.

In 2012–13 SEOG provided \$9.2 million in grants to 15,626 [GL] System students. Federal Work Study provided \$12.7 million in aid to 8,808 [GL] System students. Perkins Loans, which are low-interest loans to help financially needy students, provided \$28.4 million in loans to 15,285 [GL] System students ([Great Lakes System], 2014c, pp. 46-47).

At Great Lakes, funding allocation remained precariously balanced between properly measuring financial need and ensuring access ([Great Lakes System], 2014c). Of the twelve students interviewed, seven were enrolled in the pipeline-to-university completion programme, which meant that seven were exempt from paying any tuition fees. Three of those seven were also recipients of the government Pell grant (Jessica, Kayla, Joshua). So, the Pell served to financially support their accommodation and additional expenses such as books. Eight participants received either a federal grant or a federal or state scholarship that supplemented at least a portion of their tuition or maintenance fees. It is important to note, however, there were two students who were outliers regarding receiving funding. Christopher (22, Akan) was not a permanent resident or citizen of the US until his third year of university because he emigrated from Ghana at the age of nine. As a result, he was ineligible for federal financial aid or large federal scholarships.

Table 6.1 Overview of Great Lakes participant finances (self-reported)

| Pseudonym | Financing tuition fees | Financial maintenance costs | Projected final debt amount | Debt anxiety (1-5) | Empl - oyed | Residence while at uni | Parent support |
|-------------|---|---|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Jessica | Free Tuition | Pell/ scholarship/ employment | \$8,000 | 4 | Y | Private apartment | N |
| Michael | Pell/ grant/ employment | Employment | \$30,000 | 4 | Y | Private apartment | Y/ pocket money less than \$5 per month |
| Christopher | Free tuition | Scholarship | \$6,000 | 4 | Y | Private apartment | N |
| Ashley | Pell/ employment | Employment | 0 | 5 | Y | Private apartment | N |
| Kayla | Free tuition | Pell/ scholarship/ loans/ employment | \$8,000 | 2 | Y | Private dorms (on campus) | N |
| Sarah | Free tuition | Scholarship/ employment | NA | 1 | Y | Private apartment | Y/ \$200 per month |
| Samantha | Free tuition | Scholarship/ loans/ employment | \$17,000 | 4 | Y | Uni (on campus) | N |
| Matthew | Free tuition | Scholarship/ loans/ parents/ employment | \$3,000 | 2 | Y | Uni (on campus) | Y/ \$50 per month |
| Joshua | Free tuition | Pell/ scholarship/ employment | 0 | 1 | Y | Private apartment | N |
| Brandon | Pell/ scholarship/ employment | Employment | \$5,000 | 2 | Y | Private apartment | N |
| Elizabeth | Pell/ federal loans/ private loans (Bank) | Loans/ parents | \$40,000 | 4/5 | N | Private apartment | Y/ \$300 per month |
| Taylor | Pell/ scholarship | Scholarship/ employment/ parent | 0 | 2 | N (but am usually) | With parents (home) | N |

Since he was a pipeline programme participant, the university granted him free tuition. Additionally, Christopher was a recipient of Food Share, which is a state programme created to assist those with limited money to purchase food (Midwest Department of Health Services, n.d.). Samantha (21, Tibetan) also received nutrition support in the form of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (now SNAP but formerly US Food Stamps). They were the only two students across all three institutions who received non-educationally-based government or state support.

6.2.1 The impact of family economic capital

During their interview, each student was asked to supply information pertaining to their parents' employment. They reported that their parents held the following jobs: social worker, body shop/mechanic, sales person, certified nursing assistant (CNA), factory worker, movie theatre manager, secretary, construction worker, grocery store worker (2), and chronically unemployed (2). There was a strong correlation between their economic capital and their social and cultural capital (explained in chapters 7 and 8). The students expressed several issues when discussing their economic capital: experiencing financial hardship and poverty, fitting in to university, and the guilt of accepting student loans.

Brandon (20, African American) indicated that at the age of 15 he became a nursing assistant and was paid \$16.00 to \$17.00 per hour. Prior to Brandon's securing this position, his family (consisting of his mother and three siblings) were homeless. Brandon was very upfront about his family's economic capital and the fact that his family experienced long bouts of homelessness.

I floated from friends' houses ... I had a girlfriend of like 8 years, well 6 years at the time, so sneaking into basements and like stuff like that, and I had suitcases ... so I kinda needed to wash my clothes and stuff like that. I figured it out. I guess... and like everyone in my family are like ministers and stuff like that and they still go in front of the congregation in front of the mass and like they put on this cloak, this face, that everything is okay,

so I didn't want to be the one who ruins it and be like ... we're homeless!
(Brandon, 20, African American).

This 'cloak' represents one intersection between economic and social capital. Brandon's assessment of his family's putting on a cloak to hide their financial situation is consistent with Edwards and Jones (2009), who argue that a mask can hide one's true self and allows individuals to meet the expectations of their community. By Brandon and his family hiding their financial difficulty, they were able to maintain social status within their community. Brandon explained that, once he secured employment, he was able to pay for his family to move into a house, and he purchased a car for his commute to and from school and work.

The issue of poverty and a family's economic capital resulted in many of the students becoming emotional. For instance, Brandon expressed the pressure he was feeling to succeed academically:

My family is tugging at my feet and medical school is tugging at my hands, and its like ... do you brush off your dreams ... or kick the people that are below you even farther down... And then it's just like 'what happens if I don't make it and I cannot support you guys anymore' ... 'cause ... then we're all doomed. And I've just wasted a whole four years [of] tuition at a like a world-renowned university ... for what? (Brandon, 20, African American).

Chapters 7 and 8 explore how a student's family background and the transmission of social and cultural capital translate into educational advantage. In terms of economic capital, all the participants at Great Lakes worried about their families' and their own financial circumstances. The financial security the students received (from their tuition fee loans, bursaries, or working part-time) created guilt. The guilt drove some students to work longer hours so that they had more to send home. Testimony from Brandon demonstrated the pressure, choices, and guilt he experienced as a student. Brooks (2015), Reay (2008b), and Christie *et al.* (2008) each explored guilt as a response to the emotional dynamics that come with being a non-traditional university student. To Reay

(2008b), guilt is felt when individuals make choices outside their norm—such as higher education. Although Brooks (2015) examines guilt in relation to student-parents, it could be argued that those who take care of their family would feel guilty for diverting attention away from their dependent(s) and towards something else. Brandon suggested his guilt stemmed from being his family's breadwinner while also attending university with aspirations to become a doctor. Another example of a student suffering from guilt was Sarah (20, Mexican American) who cried about being awarded a university grant that covered all tuition fees while her sister struggled financially.

As far as paying for my rent, my bills, my groceries, I have all that covered but like [my sister] just works temp jobs. I just remember one time ... I left her apartment and I didn't lock the door. And then she, she lives in an apartment building and she was really upset and she's calling me and yelling at me ... but then she started crying cause she's actually scared of her neighbors. So, even though sometimes, I hear people say: 'wow, we're so proud of you, you're in HE', 'you're working harder', 'you're doing more' and I just see my sister and I feel like she works really hard and, sometimes she makes me feel guilty for being here, 'cause she thinks like I should be working. She says like it's a waste of time (Sarah, 20, Mexican American).

Sarah reported that she rarely spoke about her guilt of having the opportunity to attend university and be financially stable. Guilt, Christie *et al.* (2008) argued was most prevalent among first-generation students. Acquiring a learning identity at university can 'evoke powerful feelings of displacement, anxiety, and guilt' (p. 569).

Nearly all the Great Lakes students interviewed indicated that some aspect of their family life was spent in poverty. This is consistent with national data indicating minorities are more than twice as likely (25.8%) to live in poverty than their white counterparts (11.6%) (Macartney, Bishaw, & Fontenot, 2013). Elizabeth was the only student who never used the words *poor*, *poverty*, or *financial struggle* when describing her background or her feelings in relation to her peers. She saw herself as '*somewhere in the middle*' relative to her other widening-participation peers.

The desire to fit in also involved economic capital. Jessica addressed the intersections of race, social class, and economic capital—and how each affected her sense of belonging. Jessica felt that there were social divisions within the minority community due to access to economic capital. Middle-class minority students struggled to fit in with either their white peers or their more disadvantaged minority peers. More specifically, Jessica felt that

those that have accepted that they might not be accepted by the white students, they won't talk about their socioeconomic status so that they will be accepted, or even lie about being worse off [to fit in with minority students] (Jessica, 21, Mexican).

The complicated relationship of economic capital, social class, and race is important to consider (Apple, 2004). In the US, the traditional student is middle-class and white. Affirmative Action (See chapter 5) was introduced to ensure the inclusion of ethnic minorities (and to some extent women) in higher education (Leonardo, 2009). As in the UK, there is also an effort to include individuals from poor socioeconomic backgrounds—many of whom come from ethnic minority households. As a result, there tends to be an assumption that most minorities are poor. The participants at Great Lakes each mentioned a clear divide between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. Jessica in particular made it clear that she had both, '*accumulated anger and the understanding that [her] experience [wa]s totally different than everyone else's*' and that difference stemmed from the economic capital that was available to her. She felt that

the prices around [the university] tells you what socioeconomic class are accepted here. 'Cause if you cannot afford the food at the [student] market, then you cannot shop there. Automatically, you are excluded. And [in] the deli, a sandwich is \$5.00. That tells you who is welcome here and who is not (Jessica, 21, Mexican).

Jessica's viewpoint was similar to that one expressed by Ashley, who felt that it was '*harder to be poor on campus because of how much it cost to live on campus, how much it costs if you are commuting [with parking costs]*'. She explained that

'just looking around' she did not fit in (Ashley, 21, Hispanic). The financial cost of everyday things, such as sandwiches in the deli, exposed the normalisation of white middle-class individuals at the university. The viewpoints described represent what Glass and Nygreen (2011) argued is the illusion of the 'college for all' discourse that functions as an ideology to soften education policy (p. 1). They argued that, although universities have begun to include ethnic minorities in higher education, the universities do not address the structural classist and racist hierarchies that shape the university culture (Glass & Nygreen, 2011), the culture that prices sandwiches above what underrepresented students can afford. Jessica felt that,

[I] have nothing in common with ... 90% of this campus, and I feel like that alienated me too, because you cannot really have a discussion, you cannot hang out with these people if you know how they are spending, but also because you hear comments on this campus about how some things [do not cost] that much, like \$50.00! \$50.00! Are you serious? That belittles you (Jessica, 21, Mexican).

Furthermore, this university culture perpetuated the in/out discourse that Harper and Nichols (2008) examined in relation to shame that minorities take on when they feel that they do not relate to what is normal or typical. Chapter 8 examines university culture, yet culture also includes finance. Jessica and Ashley reported that their comparatively little financial capital affected their ability to fit in and in fact made them feel 'alien' in relation to their peers. In some cases, their attitudes to debt, thereby not accepting student loans seemed to create a larger gulf between those who has the financial means to take part in university cultural activities and those who did not.

6.2.2 Attitudes to debt

In total, approximately 73% of state-domiciled residents (including both majority and underrepresented students) graduated from the Great Lakes System with loan debt averaging \$29,219 ([Great Lakes System], 2014b, p. 6). The Federal Pell Grant provided '\$159 million to almost 43,000 [Great Lakes-domiciled] undergraduates the same year, averaging \$3,668 per recipient

[[Great Lakes System], 2014b, pp. 46-47). Public universities are technically autonomous from government control, but the economic downturn in 2008-09 created a perfect storm of financial hardship, from the government down to the undergraduate student by, 'ravag[ing] endowments, state budgets, current giving, and the ability of many families to cover the high and still rising costs of college education' (Johnstone, 2009, p. 190). While such is still the case at Great Lakes, all of the participants received multiple types of financial support—suggesting that these participants were considered poor enough to continue receiving support—unlike the experience Johnstone (2009) suggests. In total there are around 182,000 students in the Great Lakes System; altogether, over 48,500 students benefitted from the Pell grant, yet even with grants and scholarships the average Great Lakes resident undergraduate had over \$10,500 in unmet financial need across their period of study ([Great Lakes System], 2014b). The participants approximated their debt amounts to be between \$2,500 and \$40,000. The average self-estimated student debt amongst the 12 interviewed was \$9,740—close to the average.

All of the participants were asked to approximate their total debt burden upon graduation. This resulted in an enormous spread of projected final debt amounts. Two of the students (Michael and Elizabeth) had applied for government tuition fee and maintenance cost loans. Both paid in-state tuition fees. Michael (23, African American) was a recipient of the [GL]anner Program, which served students from low-income backgrounds and provided grants and unsubsidised access to government loans despite students having poor credit. He also was awarded a University grant of \$15,000 per year. Michael lived on his own and estimated that in total he received about \$36,000 (some of which he needs to repay as loans). Despite all the support, it still did not cover Michael's living expenses, and, as a result, he accrued credit card debt. The credit card debt was included in his final debt calculations (see table 6.1).

Although a recipient of free tuition, Samantha (21, Tibetan) took out loans to pay her maintenance costs. She noted that she did so because

it was available. I could get it if I wanted to. For me it was just like 'ohh I am going to get a degree now, I'll figure out how to pay it off'. That's basically my mentality (Samantha, 21, Tibetan).

While Samantha was clear that she did not feel outward pressure to take out the loans, she indicated that

it wasn't like such an immediate like 'I have to do it', but you know, subconsciously you know you want to take out money, so you can wear nice clothes and go out with your friends (Samantha, 21, Tibetan).

Samantha, it could be argued, embodied Goffman's (1959) dramatic metaphor of the 'performer'. Although this idea will be discussed in chapter 8, it is essential to note here the importance of finance and a student's ability to make outward, aesthetic changes in order to feel that they belong. Samantha calculated that the cost of making these changes and the need to borrow money to do so amounted to approximately \$17,000 of debt on graduation. On the other hand, Taylor (20, Hmong American) projected she would leave university with zero debt. She explained that she received the federal Pell grant along with six to seven other grants and bursaries from the state, and had been employed since she was a first-year student. The most important difference, however, was that Taylor was able to live at home. Similarly, Jessica, Joshua, Matthew, and Christopher were from the city in which Great Lakes is located. As a result, these five were able to rely to some extent on family whether that was living at home (Christopher, and Taylor), or having social connections to employment (Matthew, Joshua). Jessica oscillated between living with her parents and living on campus. She explained that at first she made a conscious choice not to take on debt, but ultimately she realised that loans were necessary for her to cover her basic cost of living:

I did not take out any loans and I was planning on not eating. That was pretty much 'no food for you, [Jessica]', and so then I remember not wanting to do that, so then I was like WELL, [Jessica] is hungry so I am going to take out loans so I am able to have food, and I am able to like pay rent. I remember that one summer I was living at home, and I was busing it to campus and the bus was like an hour and 20 minutes and that is back

and forth. So, I decided to just live on campus take out loans and accept it. You needed to compromise I guess (Jessica, 21, Mexican).

Jessica compromised by taking out several small government loans between \$2,000 and \$4,000. During this time, she was employed with one to three jobs per term. Jessica was enrolled as a full time student and employed full-time, working about 35 hours per week.

Ashley (21, Hispanic) had the highest debt anxiety of all the Great Lakes participants. Although she was awarded the Pell and other national scholarships, she worked two jobs totalling 25 hours per week. She was fearful of being in debt. More specifically,

I am pretty bad about like the whole thing about loans, and debts really scares me 'cause I am really bad at like scheduling like incrementing my money, so I just try to save as much as I can (Ashley, 21, Hispanic).

For Ashley, debt represented fear, whereas to Samantha the debt afforded her the ability to fit in with her peers, though both sought employment to help supplement their income.

6.2.3 Part-time employment

According to the NCES (Snyder & Dillow, 2015) roughly 40% of undergraduates nationwide were employed at some point during their undergraduate career, and nearly 1 in 5 worked between 20 and 34 hours each week (Snyder & Dillow, 2015). At Great Lakes, however, all but two participants were employed while attending university full-time, though the hours of employment differed. Taylor took one term off from work to focus on her academics—the term she was interviewed.

I am so used to working, and now I have to be very careful about how I spend my money. I am not making anything, in terms of things going out and money. So, I am finding that it is a bit difficult for me also because I am just used to having a job and feeling like I am financially stable, like I can support myself (Taylor, 20, Hmong American).

While she did not enjoy speaking about finances, one decision Taylor revealed was that she had decided to live at home to save money since she no longer was employed. Elizabeth (20, White American) was the outlier of the group, as she had never been employed during the academic year. She anticipated leaving university with around \$40,000 of debt, but reported that \$75,000 was her debt ceiling. To complete her undergraduate in the least amount of time possible, she enrolled in the maximum amount of modules each term (one module more than most). She believed that this would reduce both tuition and living cost, thereby decreasing the amount of acquired debt, and allow her to secure full-time employment as a university graduate sooner. Additionally, she specified that she understood that many people worked while enrolled in university; however, she

did not like the commitment because sometimes with exams there are weeks where I have to study and it's hard to balance. It's easier to just focus on school (Elizabeth, 20, White American).

Although she did not work the most hours, Kayla (23, Black/White American) experienced the most gruelling work schedule of the Great Lakes interviewees, as she worked a series of overnight shifts (9pm to 5am) each weekend.

They were looking for somebody [to work the] really weird shift. It's when Saturday turns into Sunday and, Sunday turns into Monday. It's kinda really quiet and has a lot of down time, but I get to do homework (Kayla, 23, Black/White American).

Since our interview was scheduled on a Monday, it became clear during the interview that Kayla had been awake for nearly 48 hours. She began each academic week with severe sleep deprivation, but admitted that the job as a night accommodation manager was too good to pass up as it provided free accommodation.

Of the twelve students, at least four reported that their employment was in order to support their families. The money they earned was given to parents (or in Brandon's case sent to extended family) to ensure their families were taken care of. Sending money home was not a response to being far away from family,

but a cultural expectation. For instance, Jessica (whose parents lived locally) would send money home to ensure her parents had enough to pay their bills. Brandon, similarly expressed the need to balance taking care of his family with his academic responsibilities:

It's basically like me paying for them to live ... the job is not really for me. It's for everyone else, so that is why my [academic] advisors are kinda like 'you need to cut them off from funding', but if I honestly cut them off, I could be a 4.0 student. I spend a lot of time at work. Yesterday, I was there from 9am-11pm (Brandon, 20, African American).

Fuligni, Tseng, and Lam (2003) argued that those from ethnic minority backgrounds place stronger values and greater expectations on their duty to support their families. The testimony given by the participants was consistent with Fuligni, Tseng, and Lam (2003). Although working while an undergraduate was common, all of the participants expressed the sense that they missed out on 'normal' university activities in order to earn money to support themselves and their families.

6.3 Economic capital: South Hadrian University

When you grow up in the North and you hear about the conservative party and two generations ago the debt people were in from the mining strikes, some genetic Yorkshire pride kicks in and goes 'ahh sod it we'll always be in debt'. I'm personally not bothered. I'm not going to be in a financial position where I can clear it in a year, and I am fine with that (James, 21, White English).

This section will discuss South Hadrian participants' feelings regarding family economic capital, attitudes to debt, and part-time employment. Table 6.2 provides an overview of the participants' finances.

All of the participants interviewed at South Hadrian were recipients of tuition fee loans (although the amounts ranged from £3,600 to £9,000 depending on the entrance date) and maintenance loans. Eight out of the ten specified that they were receiving additional aid in the form of scholarships, grants, or family support. Although each had applied for the loans, the majority of the South Hadrian participants could not decipher exactly how much debt they would be responsible for repaying after graduation. Several students indicated they were recipients of university grants ranging from £130 to £1,000. Five of the students disclosed that they had received the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) prior to university, though only Megan specified that she had saved that money to use for university. The rest responded that their EMA was used as pocket money. The debt figures featured in table 6.2 represent the combination of the figures they supplied on their information sheets and during their interview. Many students struggled when asked about their approximate debt burden after graduation. All, except Megan, provided different figures on their forms than what they discussed in their interviews. Table 6.2 considered both the figures provided on their forms and any differences reported in their interview.

Table 6.2 Overview of South Hadrian participant finances (self-reported)

| Pseudonym | Financing tuition fees | Financing maintenance costs | Projected final debt amount | Debt anxiety (1-5) | Employment | Residence while at uni | Parent support |
|-----------|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Chloe | Gov't grant/loans | Employment | £12,000 | 4 | N | Uni (on campus) | N |
| Jack | Loans | Loans | £20,000 | 1 | Y | Uni (on campus) | N |
| Emily | Loans | Loans/parents | £42,000 | 3 | N | Private apartment | Y/ £50 per month |
| Megan | Loans | Loans/employment/grant | £27,000 tuition + £18,000 maintenance | 3 | Y | Private (on campus) | N |
| Sophie | Loans | Loans/ own savings | £42,000 | 2 | N | Private apartment | Y/ no spec amount |
| Charlotte | Loans | Grant/loans | £30,000 | 2 | N | Private apartment | N |
| Hannah | Loans | Loans/ Parents/employment | £42,000 | 2 | N | Private apartment | Y/ £300 per month |
| Olivia | Loans/parents | Scholarship/loans | £30,000 | 4 | Y | Uni (on campus) | N |
| Thomas | Gov't grant/loans | Scholarship/employment | £40,000 | 1 | N | Uni (on campus) | N |
| James | Loans | Loans/parents | £13,000 + | 2 | N | Uni (on campus) | Y/ £400 per month |

6.3.1 The impact of family economic capital

The South Hadrian participants specified that their parents held the following jobs: web developer, engineer, garden centre assistant, writer for local paper, nuclear plant worker, civil servant, grocery store till operator, manager, army (2), and unemployed (2). Generally, all of the students felt that they straddled working- and lower middle-class culture because, although they were from areas of economic hardship, they felt that their families were relatively well off. Yet, despite their relative wealth at home, the students struggled with the extreme wealth displayed by their university peers. Jack commented that

people [at university] will be talking about how they had Christmas in France and you're just like 'great' thanks for that. (laughs) But I think it's

money which separates everything. Which is not the nicest thing. [My friends] went on [a] ski trip and I really wanted to go, but obviously I couldn't afford it. Maybe if a few of my friends would go... but all of my friends go. And I was at home over Christmas and I was watching Facebook and their photographs being uploaded and it was kind of depressing. [There were two of us who didn't go] ... well we made our upstairs into a snow room and we went down the stairs in cardboard boxes (Jack, 21, White Welsh).

Jack's experience was similar to Jessica's. Both noticed the social and cultural differences that economic capital created between themselves and their peers. Again, testimony by Jack supported Glass and Nygreen's (2011) argument that universities fail to address the class hierarchies that ultimately shape the university culture. Jack commented that he enjoyed introducing his university peers to his family and hometown:

What is good is when some of them [peers] come stay with me... I think I'm showing them stuff exists outside ... Being brought up in austerity or hardship, (I don't want to make it sound like anything bad, my parents have done well), but the area I live, I know ... I've seen people who don't have a job or don't have any income or anything, so I hope to just [show] them [university friends] that there's life outside (Jack, 21, White Welsh).

First-generation students face anxieties in transition, but according to Terenzini *et al.* (1996) first-generation students struggle to reconcile the often-conflicting rules of community membership and higher education. So, while Jack was reconciling his and his peers' experiences, Emily (19, White English) felt that, overall, '*the university is kind of out of it in terms of understanding [the financial] needs of students like me*'. Due to the high cost of participating in co-curricular activities and paying for books and accommodation, Emily felt that the university was out of touch with the financial challenges students face. Emily reported that paying £500 for a gown and books at the beginning of term placed an enormous strain on her finances. This potential strain went unnoticed by the university. All of the students commented at what they saw as the exorbitant wealth held by their peers. Sophie and Hannah drew the distinction of being middle-class at home but not at university. For Sophie, she heard stories 'of

people just so frivolous and spending an absolute fortune'. Overall, all the students had indicators that suggested low income, such as receiving the EMA, participating in pre-university access programmes, or eligibility for specific grants. Yet, these students felt that they did not represent the nation's poorest individuals. Their feelings of economic disadvantage stemmed from comparing their own finances to those of their wealthier peers.

6.3.2 Attitudes to debt

A little over half of the students claimed that being saddled with debt did not bother them. In fact many like Jack (21, White Welsh) believed it to be a means to an end. As shown in table 6.2, estimated debt amounts ranged significantly among participants. The figures presented in the table above are a reflection of the students' written estimates provided on their information forms and during interviews, but there was a large discrepancy between what the students stated on their information forms versus the debt they verbally reported. As at Great Lakes, there was a large spread of anticipated debt amounts. This spread, however, was actually reduced during the interview. For instance, when Emily (19, White English) filled out her information form, she indicated that she would only have £1,000 of accrued debt at graduation. During her interview, it became clear that she did not take into account her tuition fee loans (£27,000) and maintenance costs (£5,000 per year). The £1,000 figure reflected her overdraft on her current account only. This suggests that the students do not see the tuition fee loan as debt.

All of the students interviewed provided 'underrepresented' indicators used by South Hadrian—whether EMA, neighbourhood, family employment, or eligibility for bursaries that were just at the cusp of who was considered the poorest 40% by the targets set by the English government. Emily's change in grant eligibility demonstrated the precarious line between income levels and grant and bursary awards. In her second year she qualified for a university grant of £1,000 due to her parents' decreased earnings. She explained:

I've only started getting [the university grant] this year. 'Cause last year it was something like a £500 difference, and it put us into a completely different category which is a pain because £500 doesn't make much difference to a family of 5, but it makes a whole lot of difference in terms of what loans I can get. I have a feeling that the money I got this year was a maintenance grant. I think that was maybe £400 more each term. It wasn't a lot more, but it was good that I got it (Emily, 19, White English).

The South Hadrian participants were unsure of the types of loans, grants, or bursaries they were eligible for and receiving. Their uncertainty could be attributed to the recent changes to funding in the last several years. Many, like Jack (21, White Welsh), did not want to think about the debt they would face after graduation. Jack declared, *'Ohh God, let's not talk about my debt'*. James, however, was very outspoken about his finances (as represented at this section's beginning). Accruing debt to achieve a university degree did not bother him.

All but Megan (21, White English) demonstrated a general lack of understanding of the debt they would face after graduation. She was the only student able to break down her loans by tuition and maintenance. She was able to keep track of her finances because Megan put any financial information relating to maintenance into a spreadsheet which helped her *'live within [her] means'*. Ultimately, she was an outlier because once she applied to university, she commented that, *'I think it just hit me, now that I go to university, you need to budget, and that's what I've done, and I know what I can/cannot spend'*. Megan (21, White English), like James, understood that student loans equated to long-term debt. She felt, *'it may be only a little bit out of my weekly wage, but it's going to be going on for years, and years, and years'*. And yet, the idea of long-term debt did not worry her. The testimonies from the South Hadrian students were in direct conflict with the research of Connor *et al.* (2001) and Forsyth and Furlong (2003). Both studies suggest that financial concerns play a major role in whether or not working-class students enrol in higher education. Yet, to James and Megan, long-term debt did not bother them. An argument could be made that, because there is a 'threshold of payment' they have less anxiety about

repayment. Said another way, because they have to earn at least £21,000 in order to enter repayment there is less anxiety, as they will have the financial means to enter repayment. Nevertheless, many expressed hope that, by investing economic capital into higher education, they would be more competitive in the job market after graduation. A potentially serious issue to highlight was the use of overdraft; three students (Thomas, Emily, and Chloe) used a student overdraft to compensate for overspending during term time. Emily (19, White English), when addressing the issue of debt, admitted that she used her bank's overdraft allowance of £500 the previous year and '*expect[s] to have to use it over the next two years*'. Chloe (22, White English) also took out an overdraft. The difference between the two participants, however, was that while Chloe did not include the overdraft in her expected debt amount, Emily attributed it to be her only debt even though she will have accrued about £42,000 worth of loans upon graduation. This difference suggested that, to some students, the loans did not feel like debt. Callender and Jackson (2005) studied the link between widening participation students and debt by researching whether the fear of debt constrained university choice. As expressed above, many (Connor *et al.*, 2001; DfES 2006b; 2003) were concerned about the effect tuition fees would have on students from poorer backgrounds. Callender and Jackson (2005) concluded that debt aversion was not related to choice of qualification, and that potential students 'were much more willing to respond to fear of debt by living near their family home and pursuing a course in the subject they wanted' (p. 427). The Independent Commission on Fees (ICoF) (2014) examined trends in higher education admission and enrollment. Although the intent was to examine the effect of tuition fees on participation, they discovered a participation gap based on family background. One of the largest concerns regarding widening participation is regarding tuition fees and the uneven accumulation of debt by those from a low socioeconomic background. It seems that, among the South Hadrian participants, tuition fees were not always seen as debt, but were seen to enhance future employment prospects.

6.3.3 Part-time employment

All of the students mentioned that they held jobs during vacation periods. Yet, the types of jobs differed drastically. Several students mentioned they held low-paying service jobs, such as working at Subway sandwiches or at a café. Three South Hadrian students (Jack, Megan, and Olivia) noted that they were also employed during term, though the hours were often less than five per week or were inconsistent. James indicated a different outlook on work during term time. He mentioned that someone suggested to him that one way to subsidise his maintenance grant would be to work during term. He said that *'most of the people here who have a job tend to be far more social than I am. So I can tell exactly where their paycheck is going'* (James, 21, White English). This statement by James implied that those who work during term spend the money on food, alcohol, and other social activities. Reay (2005) suggested that defensive statements often reflect underlying feelings of shame pertaining to not being the typical student at an elite university. The statement expressed by James could be understood as a defensive statement pertaining to his social class location, and perhaps his feelings of not being able to participate in 'proper' student life. Commenting that his peers have the ability to spend their money on social activities reveals that he himself did not have the same capability.

Another difference, however, was between those who were employed in low-paying service-sector jobs (Chloe) and those who held (unpaid and paid) positions analogous with being members of a society or for building their Curriculum Vitae. For instance, Megan mentioned that she was a freelance journalist for several campus newspapers. She acquired the position as follows:

you go in freshers' week and you can sign up for the different sections of the paper that interest you. And they'll send out content calls ... and if you're the first to respond you can write on it. Or they send it out to a lot of people and the best article will be published. And it's really flexible (Megan, 21, White English).

Additionally, Megan volunteered with the Brownies organisation. Olivia (19, White English) also listed an unpaid, volunteer position as employment. When

asked during the interview, she indicated that the position was not to earn money, but to build her Curriculum Vitae. Rather than find paid employment, James balanced a number of volunteer positions within the university. This was not uncommon amongst the participants. The South Hadrian participants differed greatly from their Great Lakes and Antonine counterparts in that all but two could afford to volunteer or select employment positions based on gaining experience. Some of the Great Lakes students worked full-time while they were enrolled in higher education simply to keep their family housed (Brandon). While much attention has been paid to the employment prospects of working-class people (Reay *et al.*, 2005), working-class student employment (Watts, 2002), and the ability for middle-class students to take part in volunteer opportunities (Bibbings, 2006), seemingly little research has addressed the differences between wage labour and volunteerism for working-class individuals. The difference between these two suggests that, even within the widening participation community, there is a stratification of available economic capital.

Overall, the South Hadrian interviewees did not feel that they needed to be employed to supplement their income. Despite the debt incurred, term time was seen to be strictly for academic and co-curricular activities, and working was left to the summer. Summer also represented a time to make up for financial mistakes. One example was from Thomas (20, White English), who overspent during his second year, took out an overdraft, and forgot that he had to pay rent during the summer regardless of whether he occupied the flat or not. Because of all these issues, he encountered a £1,600 financial shortfall, and took on two jobs to keep to his budget. Another interesting point to highlight is none of the students were employed in order to support their family at home as was the case for four Great Lakes students. The South Hadrian students were only responsible for supporting themselves, and four received additional support from their parents. Furthermore, none of the South Hadrian students lived with their family at home. This suggests a slightly higher socioeconomic profile of student participants at South Hadrian than at Great Lakes.

6.4 Economic capital: Antonine University

If I were to have to pay tuition fees I wouldn't be able to do this. If we were having to pay the fees that they are having to pay in England, I just couldn't do it. I really could not afford to do it. I've got a lot of friends. I can think of one in particular when he graduates he knows that he's just going to have so much debt that actually it's going to take him probably near enough his whole working life to pay off (Andrew, 20, White Scottish).

This section features the reported experiences of the participants from Antonine University pertaining to their family economic capital, attitudes to debt, and part-time employment. Table 6.3 provides an overview of all 8 participants, along with their projected final debt, debt anxiety, and employment.

All the participants interviewed were Scottish-domiciled and, therefore, entitled to a tuition fee exemption. Since Rebecca (40, White Scottish) was repeating her first year due to a family illness, she was required to pay full fees for the year she repeated. This is reflected in table 6.3. Seven of eight (all but Rachel) had taken out loans to pay for their maintenance costs, and reported that they received anywhere from £450 to £600 of support loans per month. Two (Rachel and Ryan) were recipients of maintenance grants of £200 per month. On top of the grants, five students were awarded government grants ranging from £100 to £1,000. Two indicated a sudden and drastic decrease in their maintenance grant levels between 2013/14 and 2014/15. Rachel's (22, White Scottish) grant of £250 was reduced to £50, and Ryan's (19, White Scottish) grant decreased from £450 to £100.00.

Table 6.3 Overview of Antonine participant finances (self-reported)

| Pseudonym | Financing tuition fees | Financing maintenance costs | Projected final debt amount | Debt anxiety (1-5) | Employment | Residence while at uni | Parent support |
|-----------|------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Emma | Free tuition | Loans | £23,000 | 5 | N | Private apartment | N |
| Lauren | Free tuition | Loans | 0 | 2 | N | Own home | N |
| Rebecca | Paying Full Fees | Loans/employment | £20,000 | 2 | Y | Own home | N |
| Amy | Free tuition | Scholarship/loans/employment | £20,000 + | 4 | Y | Private apartment | N |
| Ryan | Free tuition | Grant/loans & mum pays for flat | £15,000 min | 2 | Y | Private apartment | Y; £40pm for bus pass from dad |
| Andrew | Free tuition | Scholarship/loans/employment | 0 | 1 | Y (non-term time) | Private apartment | N |
| David | Free tuition | Loans/employment | £32,000 | 2 | Y | Private (on campus) | N |
| Rachel | Free tuition | SAAS Grant/parents/employment | £1,000 | 2 | Y | Private apartment | Y/£100pm |

Chapter 3 highlighted the significant changes to the SAAS grant for the 2014-2015 academic year decreasing for those earning below £17,000 from £1,750 to just £750. Only two students, Rebecca (40, White Scottish) and Amy (25, White Scottish) continued to receive full maintenance grant support. One reason for Rebecca receiving this support was her need to pay full tuition fees as mentioned above. Although tuition fees are waived for Scottish domiciled students, there are still costs associated with attending university. The next section addresses the effect of economic capital on the student experience.

6.4.1 The impact of family economic capital

For the students in Scotland their parental (or their family) employment differed dramatically: antique restoration, beautician, nurse, whisky distiller, waste management, cleaner, dinner lady, manager, insurance agent, army (2), and unemployed. Emma and David mentioned they grew up impoverished and had no financial safety net. Emma (35, White Scottish) who was a single parent indicated that, compared to her peers she felt

very poor. Not in the same level at all, really not. I've got two mouths to feed and a roof to keep over our heads, so even if we have the same amount of cash, we don't have the same outgoings. I've really struggled. I've really, really struggled (Emma, 35, White Scottish).

Emma's experience supported what Christie (2009) argued were the complex circumstances that adult students encounter while in higher education (e.g. having children and/or partners). Due to Emma's family situation, her finances were tighter than those of her single, traditional aged (18 to 25 year old) peers. David reported that although he had access to government loans, if he ever found himself '*really stuck financially*', he would be forced to leave higher education. This realisation has caused resentment towards his peers, something that Jessica (Great Lakes) also voiced. Smith, Allen, and Danley (2007) explored the idea of resentment, but through the lens of 'racial battle fatigue'. While this lens might not be appropriate for David, their understanding of the resentment (and other types of distress that accompanied underrepresented students at university) might shed light on the feelings of David (and Jessica at Great Lakes). For many of the students interviewed, their notion of being a student was about 'doing', rather than what Christie (2009) refers to as 'being' or 'becoming'. Being a student represents the discourse of the middle-class student, but many of the participants in this study had 'to do' by working in their free time rather than taking part in co- or extra-curricular activities designed to help them reflect who they could become. This 'doing' Christie (2009) argued represented a 'class-based identity and lifestyle' (p. 132). Because of this difference between being and doing, it could be argued that students like James (21, White English), David (25, White Scottish), Brandon (20, African American), and Jessica (21, Mexican) resent (or are jealous of) their middle-class peers. This class-based understanding of identity was tied directly to their economic capital. While Rachel was an outlier of the participants regarding her diligent budgeting, she was typical of those interviewed due to her relatively deficient finances which inhibited her co- and extracurricular involvement and her ability to be spontaneous (see chapter 7).

6.4.2 Attitudes to debt

Concerning debt, five out of the eight students were 'not bothered' or 'slightly bothered' (entering 1 or 2 on the information form) by accruing debt. Only Emma indicated that she was '*extremely worried*' (5). David, the student who claimed to owe the most (£32,000), was only '*mildly worried*' (see table 6.3). In his interview, he explained that he received about £765 per month in loans; over the course of nine months that equates to around £7,000 (and to £28,000 over the course of his undergraduate career). Additionally, he reported that he had taken out an emergency loan of £1,700, bringing his total to approximately £30,000. During the interviews only Emma, Ryan, and Rachel were able to provide a specific number to their expected debt amount. This variation was similar to the South Hadrian students. Table 6.3 above demonstrates the range the participants provided as their 'best guess' of their final accumulated debt upon graduation. Overall there were several reactions to educational debt: worry (Emma); being resigned to it, but having a great time while in university (Amy, Lauren, Andrew, and Ryan); not acknowledging it (Lauren, David); or debt aversion (Rachel). Amy specified:

I'd rather have money now and be enjoying uni and sort of be paying it back that little bit every month. Which is not the best attitude, but it was kind of an expected thing. I don't want to say I was resigned to it, but I sort of expected it was the norm and I was just going to have to do it if I wanted to (Amy, 25, White Scottish).

Additionally, the loans meant an opportunity to attend university.

If I was having to just work I'd still be at home. I couldn't afford living in town, rent, and what have you. So I think, [the loans have an effect] not so much on the academic experience, but on the social experience. The fun part I'm gonna say (Amy, 25, White Scottish).

Amy's response was similar to that of Michael (23, African American) and James (21, White English). She accepted the loans and debt with the understanding that it was necessary to attend university, although the loans supported both her academic and her social activities.

Lauren reported a similar attitude:

I mean, obviously I haven't done the calculations, but I am guessing it's not going to be a big amount you have to pay back monthly. And yes, I feel like I'd like to do something that I enjoy doing and maybe not have as much money and get a better job to pay off my loans. Maybe I am wrong not thinking about it, but I don't see it as an issue ... it hasn't really entered my thoughts 'ohh no, I have this loan'. I mean I don't have a credit card or anything. I'm really against getting loans in that kind of way, getting in debt and getting interest, so I don't have anything else ... it's just my student loans (Lauren, 29, White Scottish).

Lauren's response was also very similar to that of the South Hadrian participants. Lauren assumed that she would not be expected to know this type of information until after graduation. For many of the UK students, their explanations of debt suggest an 'out of sight out of mind' approach. It could be argued in the case of South Hadrian that, because the system of tuition fees is so new, students have yet to grasp the full effect student debt will have on their adult life.

Although Scottish-domiciled students were exempt from tuition fees, several were resigned to take on debt in order to pay their maintenance costs. The Commission On Widening Access (2015) Interim Report stated that young people from deprived backgrounds in Scotland 'were more debt adverse than their peers in England' (p. 72). While all of the participants expressed great relief that they were not responsible for the £9,000 tuition fees in England (and all said that they never would be able to afford it), five out of the eight students had loans over £20,000. This situation supports the findings of Blackburn (2014), that even with the absence of tuition fees, levels of debt for Scottish students were comparable to (or in some cases higher than) those of students from other devolved administrations (p. 1). Moreover, the slim margins of bursaries and loans did not allow for unforeseen financial difficulty. For instance, in his second year David realised that he selected a flat beyond his financial means and had to apply for a small emergency loan through Antonine

University Students' Association. In addition to the loan, he negotiated with his landlord:

I've requested to pay [rent] at the end of August when I work the [festival]. But it's been denied. So I am not sure what I am going to do. I'll be looking at some fines probably (David, 25, White Scottish).

Because David lost his accommodation bursary (due to moving out of university residences), he took out an emergency loan of £1,700 and reported that he was still short about £640. The debt for David was compounding as he reported that he struggled to manage his finances—nevertheless, he was only slightly bothered about the debt he was incurring.

6.4.3 Part-time employment

To be more financially secure, some students turned to term-time employment. Four of the participants indicated they were employed at some point during term time; a further two were employed during the summer months. Of the four who worked during the academic year, their employment ranged from working at a care home (Rebecca), to Marks and Spencer's (Amy), to a paid sports referee position (Ryan), to private babysitting (Rachel). Amy worked roughly 16.5 hours per week and indicated that

the further I get in my course (and the closer I get to that end goal) the more I grin and bear it and try to get through [work] (Amy, 25, White Scottish).

Three students (Rebecca, Amy, Rachel) worked in the service or care industry for low wages, whereas Ryan had the ability to 'work for fun'. The resistance (among some) to term-time employment was a strong commonality with those interviewed at South Hadrian. Amy was the only UK participant employed over 16 hours per week. This contrasts with the fact that seven of the twelve American students were employed anywhere from 16 to 35 hours per week. Another commonality between the Antonine and the South Hadrian participants was their perception that summer employment would allow them to subsist

during term-time. David and Thomas (South Hadrian), while facing compounding debt and the inability to pay their outstanding bills, saw summer rather than term-time employment as the main way to become more financially solvent. It could be argued that a student's resistance to work (during term-time) was a direct response to the fact that paid employment during term time was not common amongst their peers. Although wealthy students might choose to work in the summer or accept unpaid internships, selecting to only work outside of term-time or accepting unpaid internships are not always possible for working-class students and, in fact, leaves them very financially vulnerable. Middle-class and wealthy students can afford to take out the maximum amount of loans since they are better situated to repay them after graduation, as well as select work based on the overall experience and advantage to future career rather than the economic capital gained.

6.5 Conclusion

According to Savage (2015) 'economic inequalities are fundamentally important' (p. 49). Bourdieu (1993) argued that economic capital is not enough to determine social class; however, the participants self-reported finances suggest that economic capital contributes to (and limits) the development of social and cultural capital. The relatively deficient economic capital held by all thirty students led to different levels of social and cultural opportunities and constraints. Across the three institutions, each student indicated that their social class and access to economic capital affected their ability to participate in co-curricular and extracurricular activities, and feel connected to their peers. When discussing family economic capital, the Great Lakes participants indicated homelessness, receiving free school lunch (in primary and secondary education), receiving food stamps (federal aid), or enrolment in a food share programme (state aid). Two Antonine participants indicated having lived in poverty. No such terms were used in the South Hadrian interviews. While the

participants handled financial shortfall (or in some cases financial plenty) differently, some overall conclusions can be made in relation to this group.

First, the ten students at South Hadrian acquired the most debt, averaging £26,500 per student. Despite free tuition, Antonine participants followed with £13,875 of debt, and Great Lakes students averaged \$9,750 per student (roughly £6,300). Although the Great Lakes students approximated that they will accrue the least amount of debt, on the whole they signalled the highest debt anxiety, with half claiming to be worried (4) or extremely worried (5) about debt. One reason Great Lakes students have less debt is that long-term, well-structured, government, state, and university loan, grant, and bursary structures have been in existence since after the Second World War (Mumper, 2003). It is also important to note, however, that of the twelve students featured, Elizabeth (\$40,000 of debt) is most likely representative of the vast majority of students in the US. The difference in the US is that students have a variety of choices regarding the type of institution and the cost associated with their attendance, whereas students in the UK have institutional choice, but in England all pay £9,000.

Second, there was a substantial employment difference between students at Great Lakes and the two UK institutions South Hadrian and Antonine. None of the South Hadrian participants were employed during term time. All indicated that they were employed only during summer or between terms. Half of the Antonine students were employed during term time. Amy recorded the most hours at around 16 per week. All but two Great Lakes students were employed. Three Great Lakes students reported working between 2 and 10 hours per week five worked between 16 and 30 hours per week, two worked 30 and 35 hours weekly, and six held multiple jobs. Differences in term-time course load were not the reason for this variance. Each participant was enrolled full-time (between 12 and 18 credits). Each credit signified one hour of classroom contact time, and it was expected that a student would also study independently for two to three hours per classroom hour ([Great Lakes System], 2014b). Therefore, a

full-time Great Lakes participant would study an average of 36 to 45 hours per week. These figures were similar to the hours suggested by both South Hadrian and Antonine universities. The amount of hours the Great Lakes participants were employed is one reason why their debt burdens were lower than their UK peers'.

The Great Lakes students' debt aversion could be attributed to their own socio-economic positioning. Working long hours, in addition to full-time academic schedules indicated an inability to become involved in extracurricular activities. And yet, even though most South Hadrian and Antonine participants did not hold employment while attending university, across all three institutions all students felt that they could not take part in all university events on offer due to the prohibitive costs involved. Their exclusion (and other reasons explored in chapters 7 and 8) contributed to all the students having feelings of economic inferiority compared to their peers. All the student participants believed that their 'traditional' peers had the ability to ask their families for financial support, but expressed that they had no such financial safety net. The lack of safety net led some to resent their peers. Both David (Antonine) and Jessica (Great Lakes) experienced these feelings. The feelings of resentment and guilt were consistent with the work of Reay (2008a; 2008b), Brooks (2015), and Christie *et al.* (2008). Perhaps most important, the findings suggest that the Great Lakes students were more economically disadvantaged than those at South Hadrian and Antonine (perhaps Emma and David were the only UK students who came close to the socioeconomic status of the Great Lakes students). At the two UK universities, the students who perceived themselves to be disadvantaged were much more advantaged than those at Great Lakes. This could suggest that because of their well-established pipeline programmes, government TRIO programme, and student support services, Great Lakes is more seasoned in widening participation. Alternatively, it could suggest that Great Lakes targeted poorer students overall.

Finance, however, was not the sole reason that these students felt ostracised from their universities. The students struggled with a variety of social, cultural, and family issues that taken together compound the challenges for underrepresented students. Chapter 7 builds upon the discussion of economic capital by addressing how students' social capital affects their university experience.

Chapter 7: Social capital and the experiences of widening participation students

7.1 Introduction

In higher education, social connections affect not only an individual's ability to access higher education, but also their ability to access the activities on offer once enrolled. This chapter will address how the thirty underrepresented students interviewed used their social capital to build networks prior to and during their time at three elite universities. Chapter 6 highlighted issues pertaining to finance and debt, and their effect on the student experience. This chapter builds upon the discussion of finance by examining how social capital affects expectations of university attendance, university transition, and social involvement. The definition of social capital follows Bourdieu (introduced in chapter 2); social capital is seen as the social resources and networks students use to maintain and secure advantage (secured both inside and outside the family). According to Bourdieu (1993), social capital serves to multiply the effects of economic and cultural capital. Having social capital does not in fact create social harmony, but rather social capital networks of the middle- and upper-classes are mechanisms to maintain their power, control, and privilege. Overall, there are many themes expressed by students attending all three universities; however, in order to highlight university-specific examples of the ways in which social capital shapes student experience, this chapter is organised by jurisdiction.

7.2 The creation of social networks: Great Lakes

According to Bourdieu (1986), social capital results from social connections and networks. Social capital is a means of 'allowing the privileged and powerful to use their connections to help each other and protect their interests' (Savage,

2015, p. 131). This section will first address the pre-university connections such as family or teacher connections that either helped or hindered educational aspirations. Second, university pipeline programmes as a means of creating social connections will be explored. Finally, the social connections developed at university will be reviewed.

None of the Great Lakes interviewees indicated that their families helped to connect them to higher education. Yet, using their own social networks they were able to secure a place at an elite university. Nine out of the twelve students credited university pipeline programmes designed to raise aspirations for introducing them into higher education. Two of the remaining three (Ashley and Elizabeth) were not involved in pipeline programmes, although Ashley was admitted into a support programme as a condition of her university acceptance. In contrast, Elizabeth credited her pre-university friend-group with assisting with her understanding of higher education. The last of the twelve, Brandon, despite his involvement in a seven-week summer school programme designed to increase university preparedness, discussed his feelings of isolation while attending university. These feelings, according to Brandon, contributed to his feeling as though he had little-to-no support at university.

7.2.1 Family pressure

Among the twelve students interviewed, there were differing levels of social and family pressure placed on higher educational enrolment and graduation. Five of the twelve indicated feeling pressured by their family to attend higher education (Christopher, Kayla, Sarah, Samantha, and Matthew), though this pressure was not always perceived as negative. For instance, Joshua credited his mother with pushing him into university, but he felt that the pipeline programme was a

pivotal part of my deciding to go to college. My parents never went to college. My dad, kind of finished high school in Vietnam, my older brother didn't go to college, so I think, me going to college was a huge step into being in America, I guess (Joshua, 22, Vietnamese/Chinese).

Samantha (21, Tibetan) and Christopher (22, Akan) were the only two students who reported being born outside of the US. Eight of the twelve, however, indicated they were from an immigrant family. Table 7.1 demonstrates the heritage of each participant.

Table 7.1 Self-reported racial or ethnic heritage, place of birth, and nationality

| Name | Age | Racial or ethnic heritage | Place of birth ¹ | Current nationality |
|-------------|-----|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Jessica | 21 | Mexican | Midwest, USA | Dual American/Mexican |
| Michael | 23 | African American | Midwest, USA | American |
| Christopher | 22 | Akan (African) | Ghana | Akan |
| Ashley | 21 | Hispanic | Midwest, USA | American |
| Kayla | 23 | Black/White | Midwest, USA | American |
| Sarah | 20 | Mexican American | Midwest, USA | American |
| Samantha | 21 | Tibetan | Pokhara, Nepal | American |
| Matthew | 18 | Laotian | Midwest, USA | American |
| Joshua | 22 | Vietnamese/Chinese | Midwest, USA | American |
| Brandon | 20 | Black/African American | Midwest, USA | American |
| Elizabeth | 20 | White | Midwest, USA | American |
| Taylor | 20 | Hmong American | Midwest, USA | American |

Each student from an immigrant family indicated that by attending higher education they became ‘more American’. Although students were unable to define what becoming ‘more American’ meant, to them they were fulfilling their parents’ educational dreams. Despite what Joshua expressed as his parents’ inexperience in higher education, they saw higher education as a way to connect to the wider American culture. Joshua explained that his parents viewed education as one way to achieve ‘*the American Dream*’. When he was asked to articulate what he meant by ‘*the American Dream*’, he said,

I think the American Dream ... it means you know you don't have to come from somewhere super well-off to be well-off in the future. I think that, what that really means to me is ... regardless of the fact that my parents do not speak English and that they do not have a whole lot of money that

¹ The exact state is changed to ‘Midwest’.

doesn't mean that in the future I can't be that way (Joshua, 22, Vietnamese/Chinese).

Joshua's interpretation of 'the American Dream' was based on economic achievement and social class advancement, not on developing social connections. Yet, later in the interview, Joshua felt that the connections he has made in the School of Business at Great Lakes had led to a high-paid summer internship. The internship, he said was *'going to be paying more than my parents ... have ever been paid in their whole entire lives'*.

Rather than having a supportive family, Michael, Sarah, and Brandon all voiced that their families contributed to a lack of educational expectations. The most extreme case was Brandon, for whom education was the 'enemy'. When speaking of higher education, he said that

where I come from education wasn't really pushed. It was like ... why would you want that? You are sucking up to the teacher, or, they do not know how to teach ... or ... it was always an excuse (Brandon, 20, African American).

Because neither his peers nor his family encouraged education, Brandon was unsure how to lay the foundation for and apply to higher education. His inquisitive nature, he felt is what helped him develop the social connections necessary to complete his university application. He explained:

I wanted to be a doctor [and I would] ask questions of how do you get there ... and people were like you have to [go to] college and then they really couldn't give me answers at the time, but I kept asking (Brandon, 20, African American).

Brandon's experience was extreme (he was one of two participants in the study actively discouraged from education), but his experience offers insight into how new social networks beyond the family are used. Brandon reported that he leveraged his time as a nursing assistant to ask co-workers and doctors the steps needed in order to become a doctor. It is important to consider Bowl's (2003) study that argued that a lack of access, support, and guidance resulted in

a lack of educational opportunities. Brandon's testimony demonstrated the characteristics that Bowl (2003) described, and yet, he was enrolled in an elite university. Arum and Roska (2011), in their research entitled *Academically Adrift, limited learning on college campuses*, argued that working-class children 'often fail to follow paths that are likely to lead to desired educational ends' (p. 41). Brandon succeeded to enrol in a top American university because he was able to communicate with individuals in the 'know', while working as a nursing assistant, which allowed him access to information that was critical in his educational progression. In his interview he credited being an inquisitive person with his success, but it was unclear from the data exactly how Brandon overcame the negative views of education from his family. Perhaps Brandon himself was unclear. Nevertheless, although not supportive at the onset, once admitted, Brandon's home community placed an enormous emphasis on him to be successful, as did Sarah's, Jessica's, Joshua's, and Taylor's.

According to the participants, friendships served both to guide and hinder their road to higher education. Three students believed social connections with peers helped their understanding of university. Jessica, Joshua, and Elizabeth gained their knowledge about higher education from their university peers. Two in particular noted that their experiences were in opposition to their friend group from home. For Kayla and Taylor, their friends either dropped out or never enrolled—so they differed from their friend-group, many of whom married young. Taylor explained that some of her lack of academic motivation stemmed from being lost and feeling pressure from her community. A lot of her friendships from home ended when she left her community to attend university, and, as a result, there was jealousy within the old friend group.

[A] lot of them got married at a young age and didn't realize like the negative impact that it would have on them in the long run that seeing me, you know, like doing well or 'well' they want to see me not do well even if they are my friends (Taylor, 20, Hmong American).

7.2.2 Teacher support

Middle and high school teachers were another source of social connections mentioned by interviewees. Because Jessica's family had little connection to education or connections outside of Mexico and their Mexican immigrant community in the US, they placed trust in educators and mentors:

because my parents didn't know English and the local [school] didn't have any translators, my parents really dropped us off and hoped for the best. Me and my sisters had such a hard time with teachers, and making friends, and figuring out assignments, and not knowing the language; so when I would ... [tell] my parents, 'I don't know, I don't have any friends, I do not know how to do this' they [would say] 'trust your teachers. Do exactly what they [the teachers] tell you and you will be fine' (Jessica, 21, Mexican).

Trust in teachers and their ability to judge educational potential were pervasive themes across most of the 30 interviewees. Gillborn and Youdell's (2001) findings (that teachers' notions of 'ability' seem to reflect judgements about the nature of a particular social group) were contradicted in Sarah's story. Sarah indicated that her teachers perceived her to be smart:

I feel like some teachers did prefer me because I was, you know, well behaved and well I know I'm light skinned, so I don't know I feel like, I feel like I got a lot of like, preference (Sarah, 20, Mexican American).

As Sarah described her educational journey, it was clear that she perceived herself to be different from her high school peer group. Gillborn and Youdell (2001) argue that teachers often discount the abilities of students from non-dominant backgrounds; however, Sarah did not encounter this. Yet, by identifying '*I know I am light skinned*', it suggests she was aware of potential discrimination due to skin colour. Later in the interview, Sarah expressed that she had lost touch with all of her high school friends. Although they were attending other universities, none were attending elite institutions. Sarah deviated from her social group and relied on teacher advice in order to attend an elite university. The social connections she established that benefited her education were the relationships with teachers who encouraged her. Her story also reflects a racial understanding of what Archer and Francis (2007) identified

as the 'ideal pupil'. In their study, they evaluated teacher perceptions, racial stereotypes, and the effects those stereotypes have on student success. As a result of their discussions with teachers, Archer and Francis (2007) identified the discourse of the ideal pupil. Their research demonstrated how different stereotypes were associated with different races. A discussion on race and perceived ability as a result of racial background can be found in chapter 8.

Gillborn and Youdell (2001) found that students perceived to be intelligent, hard working, or just quiet were routed into advanced educational tracks. Yet, this was not initially the case for Brandon (22, African American), as he explained that he was placed in special education classes when he was very young because his teachers classified him as autistic due to his quiet nature. He found himself in the Special Education classes in public school because, in his words, he *'didn't walk or talk until [he] was 7 years old and was in special education until [he] was maybe 8'*. Once in middle school at the age of 12, he was chosen by one of his teachers for the Gifted and Talented programme. Although Gillbourn and Youdell (2001) argue that to some extent schools fail to support student who differ from the dominant majority (white, middle-class), the testimony of Brandon seemed to also suggest otherwise. Although he was initially placed in Special Education, by the age of twelve his teachers noticed his potential. Brandon credited his participation in the gifted and talented programme for his entry into a good high school and, afterwards to university. Teacher perception and influence as early as a students transition to high school served to create educational opportunities placing certain students in high-level classes (essential to elite university admission) as well as placing students into spaces with university recruiters, allowing them exposure to the university process.

7.2.3 Pipeline programmes

Pipeline programmes at Great Lakes aim to raise aspirations of pre-university students, prepare students by incorporating pre-university summer courses, and, after admission to university, they provide academic and personal support

throughout a student's undergraduate career. Accordingly, pipeline programmes provide opportunities to develop different social networks for first-generation, underrepresented students.

The feelings experienced during transition (from pipeline to welcome week and through the first several months) ranged from feeling '*excited*' (Samantha, 21, Tibetan), and '*wanting to take advantage of the opportunity*' (Matthew, 18, Laotian) to '*culture shock*' (Kayla, 23, Biracial; Sarah, 20, Mexican American; Jessica 21, Mexican). Eleven of the twelve students described their experiences of transition in relation to the preparation provided by their seven-week summer school and membership to the student support programme during term (see chapter 6). Elizabeth (20, White American) represented an atypical viewpoint because she had transferred from another large institution after her first year. Thus, she did not experience her initial student transition at Great Lakes; rather, her coming to Great Lakes served as a reunion as many of her friends from home already attended the university. Furthermore, Elizabeth was the only student who did not take part in a pipeline or multi-year support programme as an undergraduate.

Of those eleven who did experience the student transition at the institution, Jessica and Christopher found that the seven-week pre-university programme did not in fact prepare them for the university culture. One reason for this was that the pipeline programme enrolled only widening participation students and represented a large percentage of the total students of colour on the university campus. Thus, when Jessica and Christopher joined the rest of the university, they were overwhelmed by the fact that between 85% to 91% of the university identified as white (see chapter 5). Another explanation supports Bridges' (2009) claim that transition is not the change—change is situational; transition is psychological. Although the pipeline programme supported the students academically, it did not prepare each student psychologically for the transition to university.

Once the autumn term began, some of the students reported what could be considered *typical* transitional worry (like carrying a map to ensure they found the right building or purchasing food for the first time), but five (Christopher, Kayla, Joshua, Taylor, and Ashley) reported feelings greater than normal transitional difficulty. For instance, all of the five reported feeling out of place or encountered culture shock despite prior exposure to the university due to their seven-week access course. Christie *et al.* (2008) found that being a student involved mapping out and understanding an unfamiliar landscape, a landscape that was inhabited by mostly the middle and upper classes. As mentioned above, the seven-week summer programme only consisted of underrepresented students; therefore, it could be argued the programme did not prepare the students for the cultural and social differences of the majority of the student population. The map the students created during their seven weeks was in fact an inaccurate representation of the university culture. According to the students interviewed, the social and cultural values held by those middle-class students were felt to be drastically different to the values held by working-class, inner-city; and/or ethnic communities from which many underrepresented Great Lakes interviewees came prior to university. The testimony provided by the Great Lakes students supports Bourdieu's (1993) argument that social class compounds the effects of economic and cultural capital, particularly when cultural capital includes race.

Michael offered an alternative viewpoint of transitioning to university. For Michael, it was not the support offered by the seven-week summer programme, but rather the opportunity to begin his life anew and build alternative social connections at an elite university. He recalled arriving on campus to attend the programme orientation:

[Prior to leaving for university] my parents' dispute was like epic, like you don't understand; it was just like craziest thing ever. So no one believes me but I remember 'cause after I was in Milwaukee for that month before school. I went back to Chicago and my mom kicked me out of the house, and then, all the money that I saved in Milwaukee I actually spent on my family. So, she kicked me out of the house, me and my dad were finding

places to live. My dad went to the casino made \$700, borrowed a friend's car and then took me to college² ... And I came with no money, nothing just me and my dad and a car with no windows (laughs). When I came to college it was just kinda like, 'well I am glad I am out of that'. Now I don't have to worry about going to work tomorrow because I had [Student Support Programme] orientation. It was just a relief not to be in that situation any more. I've only been in Chicago or Milwaukee my whole life, so it's just like a brand new city; you know, let's just walk around and be free (Michael, 23, African American).

Michael was clear in his interview that he wanted to move beyond his family, make new friends, and create new social networks. His transition was made easier by a desire to get out of his family circumstances and build new relationships. The university experience created a push/pull effect, the student pushing against family background and yet, feeling the pull to return to their roots. For Michael, leaving for university was a push against his parents and community.

One final example of transition was reported by Christopher, who felt

academically behind because a lot of the people in my class were ... seemed, that's correct, SEEMED, smarter than me. Going to a class or a lecture where I was one of very, very few black students, it was surprising, one, and two, I felt a little undermined in almost all of my classes, which was sad (Christopher, 22, Akan).

Christopher's experience of being the only person who looked like him reverberated throughout all of the Great Lakes interviews. For Christopher, being the only black male in his class affected how he fit not only in the classroom but also within the larger institution. Although the interviewees knew before applying the university was not ethnically diverse, they did not foresee the psychological impact that this would have on them. Ten out of twelve students also expressed that racial difference on campus made it difficult to make friends with their classmates. In general, many remained close with the friendship groups they created during the seven-week summer school—a group

² 'College' in the American context refers to university. The words are used interchangeably.

consisting of all underrepresented students. Moreover, it could be argued that they were unprepared for how whiteness and middle-class values dominated everything from the organisation of the university to the modules on offer. As discussed below in chapter 8, both Butler (1993) and Johnson-Ahorlu (2012) argue that whiteness was less about skin colour and more about reproducing power. According to the students, this power differential had a large effect on the students' ability to create social networks and friendship groups with their white peers.

7.2.4 Creating social networks at university

All but one of the student participants enrolled in support programmes, and joined social activities such as fraternities, sororities, and the multicultural student centre. Particularly interesting was the fact that all of the students tended to join activities that reflected their cultural backgrounds, for instance a Latino sorority. A little over 10% of the university was from underrepresented backgrounds (Office of the Registrar, n.d.), but these clubs and university programmes created communities for these students. By creating a separate community, however, it also creates separation from the majority of the population, thus, unintentionally creating cultural clustering. Lin (2000) notes that inequality in social capital occurs when groups cluster. While Lin's argument was based on socio-economic clustering of underrepresented groups, the pressure placed on these students to attend university suggests that some of the participants felt their parents wanted to push their children beyond their community's cluster and into (bridging) alternative social groups.

Although much of this thesis has focused on Bourdieu's understanding of capital, Putnam's viewpoint is better suited to explain this phenomenon. When people engage in social activities, join clubs, and create social networks, the social fabric of society is stronger as a whole (Putnam, 2000). What Lin (2000) referred to as 'clustering' Putnam would call 'bonding'. As Putnam argues, 'bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD-40' (2000, p. 23). It is

assumed (and expected) that students from underrepresented backgrounds who attend elite institutions will create bridging networks that will create social advantage during and after university. Yet, because of the culture of elite universities, students from underrepresented groups tend to form bonds with each other, and as a result this could be one explanation as to why attending an elite university does not always produce social advancement. More specifically to Putnam, bonding represents exclusion from networks that could be advantageous yet provides social and psychological support for community members. For instance, widening participation students often bond with other widening participation students. This, according to Putnam, is exclusion because they are not mixing (and therefore bridging) social networks with the dominant white, middle-class student whose social connection could be advantageous. This supports Lin's argument that, by bonding with minority communities, the social connections created are in fact more 'narrow' (Putnam, 2000, p. 23) than if they were to connect with their white counterparts. The outcome of bonding capital is unclear, but the 'bonding' that the Great Lakes students experienced served to provide emotional support and a sense of place.

Brandon (also a four-year undergraduate programme participant) branched out beyond the support programme community and joined (and later led) a traditionally black fraternity. Unfortunately, his connection with his fraternity suffered due to falling below the minimum mark average, which resulted in being stripped of his President title of his fraternity.

I am the fraternity guy. I am 'Mr. Social'. I seem like an extrovert, when at the end of the [day], late [at] night and you are really trying to find me, people are 'he's probably with his fraternity, he is probably with his girlfriend' ... but obviously I am somewhere in the corner [by] myself trying to figure out my life and trying to re-work my schedule and rewriting my schedule or re-writing my future plans and trying to juggle everything and everyone else thinks I am somewhere partying or doing something else (Brandon, 20, African American).

Goffman (1959), Butler (1993), and Edwards and Jones (2009) each use the concept of identity performance or (figuratively) wearing masks in order to fit

in. Brandon understood his act as an extrovert was just that, an act. It could be argued that in many ways this act served to protect his true identity from his fraternity peers (Butler, 1993). The work of Putnam (2000), and his social connections of bridging and bonding, could also serve to explain Brandon's connections to his fraternity. Taking into account Lin's (2000) idea of clustering, it could be argued that Brandon's fraternity experience was 'bonding' since it was a fraternity to support underrepresented students; however, Brandon felt that he was in fact 'bridging'—making connections outside his community. But, taking into account Putnam's work, it seems that despite Brandon reporting that he was socialising with different groups, he, in fact, maintained much of his social connections to individuals with similar values and practices to himself.

7.3 The creation of social networks: South Hadrian

All of the students interviewed at the English university were the first in their families to attend university. Furthermore, when describing their family units, four spoke about their parents being separated, and two offered more information concerning alcohol and physical abuse or mental health issues within the home. Across all of the interviews, two themes emerged: the students generally felt supported by their parents in their applications to higher education (yet this produced pressure to succeed) and, each relied on new social connections to be successful once enrolled.

7.3.1 Family pressure

Focusing on family and community pressure, Sophie (19, White Northern Irish) and Charlotte (19, White English) reported that there was a pressure to succeed in education. Both students mentioned their home villages as former coal mining communities. Charlotte was one of the few to '*make it out*' of her village. She reported that some people from her village go to university, but those few who do rarely attend elite institutions. Charlotte felt that her admission to an elite university created '*an issue*' in her hometown because '*somebody made it*

out of Mansfield'. All of the ten students commented that their families were extremely supportive. According to Emily, her parents were

very active, they took me on open days and things. They always made sure I was doing my personal statements and I had everything handed in on time (Emily, 19, White English).

Hannah (20, White English) was offered an apprenticeship at a power plant, the same plant where her father worked, so she had to choose between employment and education. Although her father's social capital provided the opportunity for the apprenticeship, her parents urged her to attend higher education.

Hannah's account was similar to that of Emily's above, indicating that her father took time off work to visit universities she was considering. And

because [my parents] hadn't been to university, it was a completely new experience for them. They didn't really know what to ask because if you've been to university yourself, then you know what to ask [when attending open days]. They asked at school [and teachers provided] leaflets and things. And they looked stuff up on the internet, especially with what to bring to university. I brought so many more things cause my mum Googled it and I had these lists. At first it was a bit intimidating [for them] (Hannah, 20, White English).

Despite her family's inexperience, Hannah suggested that there was a clear overlap between her parents' and the school's efforts to connect her to higher education. Their largest assets, according to the majority of the South Hadrian students, were their parents. It could be argued that these students were very lucky to have the support of their families, as this was not the experience of all students at Great Lakes or Antonine. The students had access to social connections (whether family, school, or religious groups) to inform their parents and themselves on issues of higher education. These connections afforded them the ability to gather information on which university to apply to, gaining academic readiness, and setting general expectations. Nonetheless, although the South Hadrian parents were relatively active in their child's

application process, as indicated above, the parents were unable to secure what Ball and Vincent (1998) referred to as first-hand, hot knowledge reserved for middle-class, university educated parents. In their study, Ball and Vincent (1998) discovered that most working-class families only had access to second-hand, cold knowledge, and as a result, they were reliant on others for experiential advice. Savage (2015) in his work on social ties and inequality found that individuals in skilled positions (such as office managers, restaurant managers, or electricians) are more likely to know people in 'high-status' positions (because this category of work is 'public-facing'), and they tend to interact with different social classes (pp. 144-145). Thus, individuals working in skilled positions are not isolated from different class positions. Regarding the parental employment indicated by the South Hadrian participants, some examples of employment were an engineer, garden centre assistant, civil servant, and manager (see appendix 6 for full list). It could be argued that the garden centre assistant is a 'public facing' position in that this individual has the potential to come into contact with a variety of people, and therefore, has the opportunity to build what Savage (2015) refers to as weak ties. These weak ties are also a form of bridging as those with public facing positions must interact with individuals with differing cultural and social backgrounds. But, can someone an individual knows in passing be in his or her social network? Granovetter offered one potential answer. He argued that while we often think of family and intimate friends affecting our lives, in fact, it is 'those whom we know in passing who are more likely to convey benefits' (Savage, 2015, p. 132). He argued that in fact it is not pre-existing social capital, as Putnam suggests, but the weak ties that are created from chance meetings, employment, or schooling that alters one's social capital. He argues that since weak tie relationships are outside an individual's network, the weak tie relationships tend to provide individuals with information not currently known. Relating the arguments of Granovetter featured in Savage (2015) to Ball and Vincent (1998), because the parents were not connected to 'hot knowledge' the students had to rely on their teachers, classmates, or other weak ties to provide them with

knowledge outside of their social network. This is one reason why teachers proved to be important to many of the South Hadrian students.

Social connections with university pipeline programmes, teachers, and religious organisations were additional examples provided by the South Hadrian students. The experiences of Emily, Megan, and Olivia demonstrated the connections between teachers and enrolment in pre-university programming. Emily's involvement in Aspire, Aim, and Achieve was instrumental in her gaining information and making connections. Nonetheless, to Emily (19, White English) it was her teacher who '*picked particular students, and [the programme] took us to different conferences about university, different trips to different unis, which was really good*'. Additionally, she remembered that her teachers

at the beginning of 6th form handed out league tables, and [said] these are like the best universities, you should apply to those. And we also had individual interviews, where they'd say what are you thinking about doing (Emily, 19, White English).

This suggests that the influence of teachers in raising aspirations and channelling students down a higher education path should not be underestimated. This finding is similar to some of the Great Lakes students who indicated that teacher perception was key to their social connection acquisition, and furthers Gillborn and Youdell's (2001) argument that teachers' notions of 'ability' seem to reflect judgements about the nature of a particular social group.

7.3.2 Student transition

The South Hadrian participants expressed a variety of emotions when discussing their university transition. For two it was '*crazy*' and '*exciting*' (Chloe, Sophie) while Thomas and Megan felt incredibly comfortable and welcome. Ryan, Hannah, and Emily spoke about the difficulty of watching their families leave. Hannah recalled saying goodbye to her parents:

When my mum and dad were like 'we have to go now' it was horrible. [I was] so upset. I was fine though. I composed myself, but they were really

upset. I think even now when they drop me off they get upset about it. We're just a close family (Hannah, 20, White English).

For Emily, the experience was similar:

I just remember the first day. I was so tired. And me and my dad had a competition to see who would cry last. I won (Emily, 19, White English).

These descriptions of transition were expressed frequently and support the findings of Buote *et al.*, (2007) that students who leave home must learn to cope with a new set of norms and separation from their previous social networks. All indicated that the welcome week activities and their first-year accommodation created a welcoming and comfortable environment, enabling them to cope with separation and adjust to university norms.

7.3.3 Creating social networks at university

Once at university, the students noted academic, financial and co-curricular aspects of transition. In particular, Sophie (19, White Northern Irish) and Chloe (22, White English) both reported the importance of joining university activities to build social networks. All but two of the student participants became involved in some aspect of university activities in their first year. Emily and Charlotte were exceptions. Emily noted that it was not until her second year that she finally relaxed and began to enjoy university. Charlotte indicated something similar; she suffered from depression prior to university and experienced anxiety that inhibited her from becoming involved in her first year.

By the second year, all of the students were involved in university organisations such as choir, student representation positions, arts and athletic clubs, or wine and cheese societies. Overall, these students were able to gain access into middle-class culture. The university structure provided an explanation as to why this occurred. Students were divided into smaller houses and communities where they lived, ate, and socialised with each other. Unlike the support programmes at Great Lakes, student support did not stem from being enrolled

in undergraduate support programmes; rather, every student regardless of socioeconomic or ethnic background was assigned a tutor to oversee their wellbeing. All of the South Hadrian participants created and maintained more social connections with their non-widening participation peers than the underrepresented students in the other two universities. Another explanation is that the South Hadrian participants were not as disadvantaged as those interviewed at Antonine and Great Lakes. The socioeconomic status could also provide explanation as to why South Hadrian students gained access into middle-class activities and overall felt that they belonged more than their peers at the other two institutions.

Although all three universities provided tutors, the tutors at South Hadrian worked in the building where the students lived, ate, and socialised. Because the administrative officers were so accessible, the students felt very connected to these individuals and their living accommodation in general. There is an argument to be made that this level of support enabled students from different social and cultural backgrounds to mix without social class segregation. Hierarchies still existed at South Hadrian, yet the ten participants were able to access social and university organisations with greater ease than the underrepresented students attending Great Lakes or Antonine universities. Their residence halls sponsored many of the activities. This meant that despite socioeconomic backgrounds, the students could take part in the activities. Overall, it seemed the South Hadrian students were not treated as intruders, as Ball and Vincent (2001) described, but rather their acceptance offered what Skeggs (2005) referred to as *respectability*. Although Skeggs (2005; 1997) employed the term as central to the development of *Englishness* (see chapter 2), respectability could be applied here. Simply by attending an elite institution such as South Hadrian, these widening participation students were considered to be 'respectable' by the rest of the student body. Individuals learn self worth symbolically. They also learn which practices have social value. Therefore, if these underrepresented students learned the social practices, and exercised what Putnam refers to as 'bridging' social capital (creating better links to

external assets and information), these ties could be effective for social advancement.

7.4 The creation of social networks: Antonine

All eight of the student participants were the first in their families to attend higher education. Three mentioned that they had separated parents, and one indicated physical and emotional abuse in the home. Furthermore, three (Emma, Rebecca, and Lauren) were non-traditional, returning adult students. During the interviews two main topics arose: first, family support and pressure; second, social connections at university.

7.4.1 Family pressure

None of the Antonine participants described pressure to enrol and graduate from higher education. This differed from the experiences of the students in the other two universities. Although there were several reasons behind this difference, one possibility could have been that three of the students began university beyond the traditional age of 18-21 years old. Rebecca and Lauren were both married and had at least one child. Emma was unmarried and also had a child. The parents of these individuals were less of a factor in their life choices to enrol in higher education. Yet, as will be addressed below, Emma reported that her family was vocal in their feelings about her attending higher education. As at Great Lakes, for traditional-age participants, there was a range of levels of family support. For instance, Amy (25, White Scottish) and David (25, White Scottish) indicated that their extended family members helped to convince them to attend university—although David noted that his immediate family was unsure whether he would ‘*stick with it*’ (a sentiment shared by Michael from Great Lakes). Emma (35, White Scottish) indicated that she experienced a lack of family support, which stemmed from her family’s view that attending higher education was beyond their social class. She recalled:

It wasn't for people like us. No one has ever gone to university in my family. I am the first. It is still not for the likes of us. And I am treated not like a pariah but, very, very differently [by] my family because I have ideas about my station. It's not good. They don't think it's a good thing. Well, I guess they are proud, but they find it very, very strange. You know, [they] poke fun of me (Emma, 35, White).

Emma's comment indicating that higher education was not 'for people like us' suggests that social class boundaries persist. This supports what Lamont and Molnár (2002) understand as the relationship between social and symbolic boundaries. As they reviewed the literature pertaining to boundaries, they argued that group boundaries feature prominently in examining collective identity. In the case of Emma, it could be argued that her family placed a moral judgement on her values and this judgement signalled a worry that Emma's values, behaviours, and social class positioning could change as a result of her attending higher education. Chapter 2 discussed the use of the term 'barriers' regarding university access. The term 'barrier' tends to concentrate on tangible issues such as finance, thus overshadowing social and cultural exclusion (Riddell, 2015). Instead, the term 'boundary' is more precise. Boundaries acknowledge the financial limitations and divisions that exist as well as the invisible and persistent social and cultural limitations that block the aspirations of students.

Unlike Emma, Rachel (22, White Scottish) had the support of her family to attend university. Rachel also reported that one teacher in particular pushed her to apply to elite universities. When discussing her family, Rachel became extremely emotional. She understood her mother to be '*very supportive*',

but my dad kind of thought it was more sort of 'who you know' not 'what you know' so you should be more focused on networking rather than reading books. My brother dropped out of university. He ended up in a lot of problems with drugs and gambling and stuff (Rachel, 22, White Scottish).

Two factors had created too much distraction for Rachel to continue with university: watching her older brother struggle with serious drug addiction and

gambling issues, and financially supporting him by paying off his debt collectors. She discussed how she withdrew from university during her second year, although she returned a year later. In theory, Rachel should have had social connections to university because of her older brother, but his life choices excluded her from those connections, and inhibited her ability to succeed while she herself was enrolled. Rachel discussed prior conversations she had had with her father, and she felt that, he placed more value on building social connections than education. Rachel believed her father thought education and social connections were mutually exclusive. His thoughts could be attributed to the fact that he had not attended higher education. To Rachel, university represented a place not only to learn, but also to create bridges of social connection.

As for the students at South Hadrian, friendships at school for Antonine participants seemed to have had little impact on the choice to apply to university; however, in the students' opinion both teachers and pipeline programmes made a difference in their aspirations. To Rachel, her experience in JUMPS³ was crucial, as JUMPS 'wrote to universities on your behalf to give you special consideration, and they help you with UCAS forms' (Rachel, 22, White Scottish). For Andrew, the advice he received from his head teacher led him to select an elite university, but his experience contrasted with that of Lauren, who felt discriminated against due to her older brothers' behaviour in high school. She described that

all the teachers [in her local high school] kind of passed me off as another Stuart and I hated it. It was awful (Lauren, 29, White Scottish).

Lauren recounted that when her maternal grandmother passed away, her mother used part of her inheritance to send Lauren to a boarding school as a day student for several years. Lauren self-identified as 'quite poor', but the inheritance from her grandmother, her attending a private school, and her

³ The name of this pipeline programme has been altered to protect the university.

father's working as an antique dealer in Italy, collectively suggest that she in fact had access to what Savage (2015) refers to as 'weak ties'. Having attended a fee-paying school, it is entirely likely that Lauren contacted or mobilised these social connections she made in order to advance herself educationally (Savage, 2015).

7.4.2 Student transition

The Antonine University participants shared a wide range of emotions regarding the student transition. Some found the transition 'scary' or 'bewildering', and the returning adult students felt old. Two reported a change in friendship groups. In particular, Ryan felt '*great fear when his parents left*'. He recalled:

I remember my mum, stepdad, and brother were like 'okay we're going now' ... I was like 'right, ohh my god what is happening to me'. And then they left and I shut the door and I remember the first three days I didn't leave the room (Ryan, 19, White Scottish).

Ryan's reaction to his family's leaving him at university was the most severe of all of the students interviewed across the jurisdictions. Andrews and Wilding's (2004) study established that transition to university contributed to increases in emotional distress from two months prior to six weeks post university transition. Although Andrews and Wilding (2004) described transition anxiety subsiding after six weeks, their findings support Ryan's testimony of experiencing acute anxiety and depression. For Ryan, however, his distress lasted much longer than six weeks. He described how his depression, along with bouts of binge eating, greatly affected his ability to transition. He explained that his self-imposed isolation made it difficult for him to fit in with his peers. Overall, his depression had a significant effect on his coursework, and only in his third year were his marks beginning to improve. Ryan's experience offers insight into how mental health can have a significant effect on the development of social connections.

Emma and David reported that their friendship groups changed as a result of deciding to attend university. Both said they were from a council estate and self-identified as impoverished. David attributed his lack of friendships to his being the first person to leave his community and the separation that caused. This supports the analysis of Buote *et al.* (2007) on the multiple roles friends fill, but during transition to university, due to the disruption in social networks, friendships may also be lost. Many of the students interviewed across the three jurisdictions felt they had moved away from prior relationships to build new ones. At Great Lakes, new friendships tended to be grounded in their own ethnic community, at Antonine University, the students mostly developed new friendships with fellow Scottish students; however, the South Hadrian participants reported no limitations on friendship development.

7.4.3 Pipeline programmes

The three students who entered Antonine through an access course expressed dissatisfaction with the course and peer resentment. For example, Rebecca recalled:

I came here ... on a summer school programme. It was a week before freshers week, and we came in and we got taken around the university, and we went to lectures. And they had a lecturer or tutor for that week and I just remember her saying, 'well they've got to hold so many places back for [people from this city]. And it was just the way she said it, and I thought 'ohh my god, you just made me feel like I didn't deserve to be here'. And I think that was kind of a separating experience for me (Rebecca, 40, White Scottish).

Rebecca explained that she felt marginalised and stigmatised, not as a result of the programme itself, but as a result of her interaction with the staff member. Emma (35, White) separately confirmed this incident and admitted that she felt that '*there seems to be a consensus that access course students are granted a place as part of the university's philanthropic work*'. The three access students perceived there to be a stigma attached to the access course by at least some of the university staff. It is important here to understand two points. First, Christie (2009) argued that one negative experience during a period of transition greatly

affects the student's ability to fit in. Second, stigmatising access programmes perpetuates the middle-class hierarchy and solidifies their rightful place at an elite institution, reinforcing educational advantage in the process. Whether their peers and instructors unconsciously perpetuated middle-class values and domination is unclear, but it is clear that the access students interviewed felt isolated and stigmatised.

The support programmes represents one additional difference between the Great Lakes and the Antonine pipeline experiences. At Great Lakes, the pipeline made students feel supported and later represented a very strong community for the students, whereas, at Antonine, all three access course participants felt marginalised by the very programme designed to raise aspiration and introduce them to the university environment. In the US, almost all of the widening participation students are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Because of this outward reflection, students (and programmes) are open to publically identifying widening participation students. An issue with public identification, however, is the question of belonging or earning a spot—these feelings are reviewed in the next chapter. A second issue is that many minorities are then considered to be widening participation even if they are in fact from a middle- or upper-class backgrounds. On the other hand, it creates a community of individuals who (although from different ethnic backgrounds) generally share similar socioeconomic backgrounds and are often marginalised in wider American society. Thus, the programme creates a bonding effect creating solidarity. At both South Hadrian and Antonine, widening participation students are not easily identifiable and sometimes are unaware of their own classification. A major issue that needs more exploration is whether students encountering stigma as a result of their being identified as widening participation outweighs the social networks that might be gained as a result of having a community of people with similar experiences.

7.4.4 Creating social networks at university

One of the largest differences between Antonine and the other two universities was a general lack of participation in university-organised social activities. Five out of the eight students indicated that they were employed during term or out-of-term while only one student took part in university extracurricular activities. As mentioned in chapter 6, Rachel (22, White Scottish) described her inability to participate in a lot of the university clubs due to her financial restrictions. In her free time Rachel stuck to activities that were not financially prohibitive.

I watch TV ... My mom works at Standard Life they get free cinema tickets. So I'll do that or I might ... go to these societies that are just for fun. I go to the baking society sometimes [because] ... you can go for 50p a week. So yea, I [don't go] out that often (Rachel, 22, White Scottish).

Rachel, Lauren, and Emma all reported that they felt their economic status caused them to miss out on social activities. Thus, their lack of financial resources (explored in chapter 6) further served to constrain their social experiences, and, therefore, limited their potential networks. Ryan (19, White Scottish) was the only student who indicated that he used his employment to further his social connections. Ryan studied physical education and was employed as a football referee with the hopes that his connections would later enable him to find a physical education position in a school. For David (25, White Scottish), it was his co-curricular involvement that furthered his studies. As a botany student, David was a board member of the Botany Society and felt he was becoming a peer to the academic staff. For David, these academic staff members represented his friend-group at university. He reported that they were his only social connection. Depending on whether David is interested in further study and an academic career, these social connections could be quite advantageous. Concerning his peers, however, David

remember[ed] feeling resentment. I don't know that I see upper class people and the under class, but I despised the [people] and the sort of fashion type things. I am sort of a fish out of the water I think. It's hard to explain. Maybe it's jealousy (David, 25, White Scottish).

Participants across each institution revealed that they were jealous of their wealthier peers. For David, the resentment stemmed not only from his desire to have parents who supported him financially, but also despising himself for wanting to be something other than working-class. Sennett and Cobb (1977) describe the hidden injuries of class. One of the sources of injury they explored is the badge of ability. They argued that the more a 'lower' man defines himself in society in relation to other people; the more he reported feelings of exclusion (p. 96). David defines himself in relation to his middle-class peers. When he compared himself, he reported feeling resentment and shame. This shame, it could be argued, affected his ability to feel part of the university environment and perpetuated feelings of exclusion. He felt outside of the wider social network of his peers and resented the fact that he wanted to join in despite his perception that both the people and the activities were pretentious.

7.5 Conclusion

It is clear that social capital multiplies the effects of economic and cultural capital and is a mechanism used by the middle class to retain power and advantage. The feelings of isolation, stigmatisation, and jealousy for some of the students impeded their ability to fit in not only with their peers, but also with the wider university *habitus* (see chapter 8). Students who identified as being from the poorest backgrounds (Brandon, Michael, Taylor, US; Emma and David, Scotland) indicated having fewer social ties and used words such as 'loners', 'feeling alone', and 'lone wolf' to describe their social networks. Brandon (22, African American) was able to leverage weak social ties due to his employment as a nursing assistant during high school to gather the information necessary to determine how he could access higher education. Brandon's use of his weak ties supports the work of Savage (2015). Many of the students across all three jurisdictions indicated that weak ties (or chance meetings) helped with their social networks more than their parents did since the information the weak ties had was new.

When evaluating the social connections of the Great Lakes participants, the work of Putnam and Lin has been helpful in understanding how the students bonded or bridged social networks. Lin (2000) argued that the bonding of minority communities often results in narrowing social connections. For instance, Brandon reported that he was mixing (or bridging) with others at university because he belonged to an all-black fraternity. Yet, he was, in fact, bonding with individuals from the same cultural heritage. The culture at elite universities often means that students from widening participation (or minority) backgrounds form bonds with each other. This is one reason perhaps why widening participation students do not always receive social advancement from attending elite universities.

Crucial to the South Hadrian experience was what Skeggs (2005) refers to as 'respectability'. Since all of the first-year students lived in university housing where they ate, studied, and socialised together, the participants felt that their peers accepted them and included them in many middle-class activities. As a result, the South Hadrian participants experienced more social inclusion than their peers from the other two institutions.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that, despite efforts to widen participation, social class boundaries still exist. These boundaries play a large part in educational aspirations and reinforce the symbolic boundaries that dictate who belongs in higher education. The testimony of Emma (35, White Scottish) suggests that, for many, higher education is '*not for the likes of us*'. This cultural understanding of who belongs affected how Emma viewed herself in relation to her peers. Of course, this sense is compounded by the experience she (and others) encountered during the university's own access course, in which a staff member suggested that the university '*held back places*' for individuals from the city of Antwerp. Overall, the social (and racial) hierarchies served to perpetuate social inequality. The next chapter will address how middle-class, white culture drives the *habitus* at all three elite institutions. As with social

capital, the students in each jurisdiction made efforts either to transcend or to adhere to their existing forms of cultural capital and identity.

Chapter 8: Cultural capital and the experiences of widening participation students

8.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the nature of students' cultural understandings in the three universities. Much has been written on cultural production and reproduction. Willis (1977) first addressed the idea of cultural reproduction as responses to the demands of the institution (or the institutional culture). Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) argue that, in cultural reproduction, capital affects an individual's life chances and a structural reproduction of disadvantage and inequality. Cultural production, according to Bourdieu (1993), entails routines, communication styles, and internalised patterns. Yet, cultural production does not happen accidentally, but results from social conditions (Willis, 1977). This chapter will not only address the act of producing and reproducing culture as Bourdieu conceptualised it, but will move beyond cultural capital as an understanding of tastes by including an understanding of what Savage (2015) called 'legitimate culture' (p. 49). In the UK it could be argued that legitimate culture in higher education is grounded in middle-class habits, while, in the US, the legitimate culture in higher education institutions is dominated by white habits. Although whiteness also plays a part in British imperialism, hierarchy, and class organisation (Clarke and Garner, 2010), these issues are beyond the scope of the present research. Each section will begin by paying particular attention to how students related to university *habitus* (otherwise referred to as 'campus climate') and then examine particular issues raised at each jurisdiction.

8.2 The culture of Great Lakes University

This section will trace racial understandings of cultural capital by exploring the Great Lakes interviewees' understanding of the university's *habitus* (and the effect this *habitus* had on their ability to fit in with their peers), their ethnic backgrounds, immigrant culture, and language as an expression of cultural capital.

Great Lakes participants were asked to discuss how they perceived the university culture, and students' responses were divided between those who described racial inequality and those who focused instead on the pervasive celebration of university spirit through sport. Only Elizabeth (20, White American) used positive language to describe the overall campus culture. To Elizabeth, the university had '*enough diversity*' because '*no one really stood out for being different*'. She was the only white student and the only one of the twelve to express this view. As Hurtado (1992) notes, white students perceive shared campus climate differently from their African American and Latino peers. It was unsurprising, therefore, that Elizabeth perceived the university culture as similar to her own understandings and beliefs, rather than different from her own. Furthermore, eleven out-of-the twelve Great Lakes participants felt that the university *habitus* reflected white, middle-class values. Therefore, it makes sense that Elizabeth (20, White American) would perceive the university as having '*enough diversity*', whereas her minority peers would hold alternative points of view.

Both Matthew and Joshua described the university culture as '*middle-class*' and '*white*', claiming that '*throughout the day I'll walk to class and not see someone [with my] skin color*' (Matthew, 18, Laotian), and while in class rarely saw '*people like me*' (Joshua, 22, Vietnamese/Chinese). Seven of the twelve students used the word '*white*', and two more labelled the white, state-domiciled groups

as Coasties/Sconnies,⁴ implying white without using the word. Also, half of the students indicated that either Great Lakes University was not diverse or inclusive, or that it sent signals contrary to inclusion. Some of the reasons provided to support these perceptions were feelings of being accepted to fill a diversity quota (this is similar to the viewpoint of Antonine participants), their experiences of racism on campus, or feeling alienated from organised school sports and, therefore, school spirit.

Jessica, Matthew, and Brandon each felt that the university printed brochures to imply it had a diverse student body simply to recruit more students of colour. More specifically, Matthew perceived the university to have a quota system; the brochure was one way to entice students of colour into applying:

I know that they have to meet a certain quota, but I feel like they are trying to promote 'this is a really diverse university'. I read this article one time [that a] study showed [a correlation between] the more diverse the [informational] pamphlet is, the whiter the school will be. In our pamphlets there are black students, Asian students, and on a shelf it's like 'this university is diverse', but it was just advertising (Matthew, 18, Laotian).

When pressed, the students were able to identify instances of racism on the university campus. Both the racist acts and the frequency with which they took place shaped the students' perception of the university administrators' unwillingness to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for all. Jessica, Ashley, Brandon, Kayla, and Sarah all indicated experiencing racism. Several examples included the fraternity culture of the university. The most serious example took place in the 2012-2013 academic year when a black dummy dressed as

⁴ A 'Coastie' is a slang term for a female student, predominantly white and wealthy, from either the east or west coast of the US. According to the Urban Dictionary (admittedly not scholarly, but nevertheless a decent barometer of students' understandings), they wear Ugg boots (when it is not cold), large sunglasses, and North Face jackets. Overall the term represents the divide between in-state and out-of-state students, and in-state students use it to demonstrate distaste. The 'Sconnie' is an identity term used for students from this state. This term has been appropriated by in-state students and is displayed on university t-shirts and sweatshirts as a source of pride.

Spiderman was hung by its neck from a fraternity balcony. While the fraternity argued that it was Halloween and not meant with any racial undertones, it was a clear statement regarding the university's culture.⁵ To Christopher (22, Akan), instances like this one contributed to a '*feeling of being downgraded*', and, therefore, alienated him from feeling part of the culture. Cabrera (2014) writes that large, liberal institutions generally believe that they have achieved an inclusive campus climate. Instead of large, blatant acts of racism, the university experienced small (almost hidden) racist acts—what Harper and Griffith (2011) call microaggressions—that went unnoticed and were read as normal by the dominant population. To Jessica, if the university

recognized the fact that they have so many flaws within diversity and did not claim to be doing such amazing things, then it would benefit me a little bit more and I would not have to be so angry (Jessica, 21, Mexican).

A second descriptor used by the students to describe the campus culture was the '*school pride*' and '*spirit through sports*'. Michael, Ashley, Sarah, Samantha, and Elizabeth all perceived having pride in their university as a common trait amongst the dominant student group. To Sarah (20, Mexican American), the typical student always wore university colours and university sport t-shirts demonstrating university pride. To her, she did not fall into that category and did not share a devotion to sport. Jessica (21, Mexican) perceived the university as '*overwhelmingly proud*' and academic staff as promoting the '*university being great*' and being '*one of the best*'. The students interviewed were proud of attending an elite university, but the manner in which the majority (white) students at the university exhibited their pride did not resonate with these participants. Many of the interviewees expressed that they did not feel loyal to the university brand because of the negative culture it promoted regarding issues of race and diversity. Reay *et al.* (2001) note that white culture is read as

⁵ It is important to note that the university administration did respond to this incident with student suspensions. Yet, despite the discipline imposed, the students interviewed reported that this incident represented the wider institutional *habitus* and the views of the dominant groups.

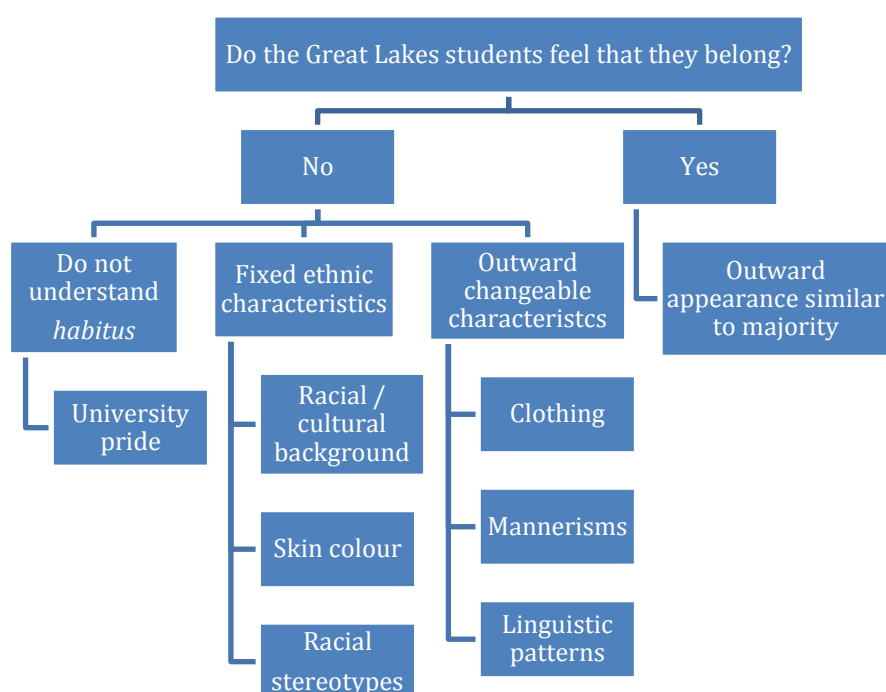
normative, and, furthermore that white, middle-class culture is ingrained in university *habitus*. The population of students of colour at Great Lakes had reached 15% (and this was the highest percentage that the university had ever accepted), yet still represented a clear minority on the campus.

The university's identity was a result of its mission, vision, and overall strategic goals (see [Great Lakes University], 2009a). Great Lakes, like the other two universities, strove to be a top-tier, elite research institution (see chapter 5). These goals shaped who applied and were admitted to Great Lakes. Because between 85% to 91% of the individuals identified as white, this group was able to fit in with the dominant white *habitus*. Thus, how the majority celebrated, established pride, and connected to the university was understood as the norm, and everyone was expected to understand and interpret this *habitus*.

Furthermore, the university promoted pride in its brand (see chapter 5), and yet the participants examined here found it difficult to have pride when they felt as though they were not valued or did not fit in.

The subject of fitting in is a very complex issue, as demonstrated through the discussion of social capital in chapter 7. Overall, eleven of the twelve Great Lakes students felt marginalised within the university. The reasons for this included unalterable personal characteristics, such as ethnic background and the stereotypes projected on them, and cultural capital clashes with the dominant university *habitus*. Figure 8.1 represents the Great Lakes students' responses as to whether they felt they fit in with the university culture and the reasons for feeling that they belong or were excluded.

Figure 8.1 Sense of belonging amongst the twelve Great Lakes participants



Additionally, table 8.1 provides information regarding the Great Lakes participants' language and cultural backgrounds recorded.

All but one of the students (Christopher, 22, Akan) are citizens of the US, Samantha (21, Tibetan) came to the US as a child of political refugees. Taylor (20, Hmong American) was born in the US, but her parents are political refugees from Laos. Ten are first-generation American (see below). The Great Lakes participants expressed that their ethnic culture and language were paramount to their own cultural understandings. These understandings, some felt, distanced them from the university culture. Six of the students (Jessica, Michael, Christopher, Matthew, Taylor, and Ashley) discussed issues of balancing their native language and native culture with the dominant white, American culture. Jessica, Christopher, and Ashley discussed English as a second language.

Table 8.1 Reported languages and cultural background of Great Lakes students

| Pseudonym | Age | Language | Additional languages |
|-------------|-----|-------------------|---|
| Jessica | 21 | Spanish | English as a second language; first generation American |
| Michael | 23 | English | NA |
| Christopher | 22 | Akan | Bilingual; English as a second language |
| Ashley | 21 | Spanish & English | Bilingual |
| Kayla | 23 | English | NA |
| Sarah | 20 | English & Spanish | NA |
| Samantha | 21 | Tibetan | Political refugees; English as a second language; first generation American |
| Matthew | 18 | Lao | English as a second language; first generation American |
| Joshua | 22 | Cantonese | English as second language; first generation American |
| Brandon | 20 | English | NA |
| Elizabeth | 20 | English | NA |
| Taylor | 20 | Lao | English as a second language; political refugees; first generation American |

For native English speakers, investment in a second language creates cultural capital. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) and Diaz (2011) argue, fitting in and acquiring the (seemingly) correct linguistic capital is vital for individuals from non-native English speaking communities. As Diaz (2011) found, ‘parents selected to exchange their child’s native language for the more valued English language in order to gain more linguistic capital’ (p. 258). Thus, while students may have capital within their own communities, the use of any other language than English in an English-speaking country provided little linguistic cultural advantage (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

To seek cultural advantage, some of the students described how they believed their parents dissuaded them from their cultural linguistic roots:

my mom had me when she was 16 and ... my (Norwegian) dad didn't have much of a part in my life. So my grandparents were really involved in raising me, and they were born and raised in Colombia. I learned how to speak Spanish. In kindergarten my mom [enrolled me in a non-] bilingual school so I lost [Spanish] right away because I was too embarrassed to

... speak [it] in front of all the other kids. I feel like my mom tried to take me away from that kind of Hispanic upbringing (Ashley, 21, Hispanic).

Because of Ashley's upbringing, she associated herself with her grandparents' ethnic group, Hispanic. Her skin colour (half Norwegian, half Hispanic), however, led to her having insecurities regarding her Spanish roots. Specifically, she felt her skin colour made it difficult to be accepted into the Latina community.

Jessica (21, Mexican), Sarah (20, Mexican American), and Ashley (21, Hispanic) all widened the conversation of culturally acceptable language to include skin colour, citizenship, and privilege. Both believed that their mothers promoted light skin by keeping their children out of the sun. For instance, Ashley felt her mother identified speaking English and having light skin as two characteristics that were more highly valued in the dominant culture of this particular midwestern state. These characteristics were valued more than the students' own characteristics of being brown-skinned and having English as their second language. These tendencies represented an effort to assimilate into the dominant culture and to adopt what was considered the more dominant and powerful capital. Butler (1993) and Johnson-Ahorlu (2012) write that minorities and whiteness is less about skin colour and more about how skin signifies the reproduction of power (or in this case powerlessness). This is an important point because power was not stratified as simply white versus brown, but in fact stratified within each racial group, as suggested by Harper and Nichols (2008). This stratification had an overall effect on an individual's sense of belonging (for a thorough examination of such topics, see Fergus (2004) and Banks (2009), or chapter 2 for a brief review).

The participants felt that their families tried to limit some of their embodied cultural capital characteristics like language and skin colour in order to fit with the dominant middle-class, white group. For each student, their cultural background and language were just some of what contributed to what Bourdieu

referred to as their *habitus*. All students have an individual *habitus*—simply a way of understanding the world. Only Elizabeth (20, White American), however, had a *habitus* that she reported as congruent to that of the university *habitus*.

Each student, except Elizabeth (20, White American) expressed worry pertaining to their ethnic background, skin colour, and racial stereotypes, and how all three affected their ability to assimilate in the classroom and with the wider student body. Following Christopher's thoughts on the difficulty of being the only black student in class, Joshua revealed similar feelings that inhibited his ability to fit in the classroom:

It's a very noticeable thing to see that I am the only student of color in most of my classes. It almost feels like I am the representative of the students of color whenever I step into a discussion class (Joshua, 22, Vietnamese/Chinese).

While Christopher and Joshua focused on issues of fitting in the classroom, Ashley, a self-described light skinned, Hispanic female, felt that she was unable to fit in anywhere due to skin colour. She was too light skinned for ethnic minority groups to accept her and yet 'too ethnic' to find companionship with white students. Although she did have friends, Ashley felt left out of certain university clubs or activities for Latina women. She stated that she never felt like she could be her authentic self, which she found very difficult. She recounted trying to join one Latina organisation and found that she stuck out from the crowd:

I could have been imagining, but I didn't feel so welcome and I felt like I was the odd one out because I was the only one who was very, I don't know ... I look, people think that I am Irish all the time, because I have ... sorry [starts to get teary]. I am white and have red hair ... and I don't look Hispanic at all. So I felt like I stuck out like a sore thumb and I'm really self-conscious about speaking Spanish too and they were just in and out of Spanish and I felt really self-conscious about it (Ashley, 21, Hispanic).

The topics of identity, ethnicity, and fitting in struck a chord with Ashley as she became extremely emotional. She indicated that her close friends and family

had an appreciation of who she was—a Latina female of Colombian/Norwegian roots—with red hair and white skin. But to those outside her close circle she remained an outsider and was unsure how she fit.

We've been really white washed by my mom and the area that we grew up in and the school that we went to, so I mean, [school is where] I feel most authentic, but I feel like it's almost easier to identify with white people because I look white and I ... I've been white washed (Ashley, 21, Hispanic).

Ashley's experience as it relates to the variability of ethnic minorities is important. Harper and Nichols (2008) argue that the variability amongst skin tone within minority communities perpetuates exclusion. Clarke and Garner (2010) examine Anderson's 1991 study of community and the effects of community on identity. Anderson showed that the strength of community stems from the feeling of comradeship and the sense of belonging one felt from being part of a group. Ashley, in essence, experienced exclusion twice, once from the dominant white community and again from the ethnic community. She felt very little comradeship with individuals from the Hispanic ethnic group, the group with which she most identified, and felt no comradeship with the white community even though outwardly she looked as though she fit in with that demographic.

While Ashley experienced exclusion from both white and Hispanic groups, Sarah, also from a Hispanic background, described her ability to fit in with white students because of her skin colour to be a 'curse'. She cried as she described it:

I feel like sometimes I have challenges from being at this institution, and then when I try to talk about it with other students of color it feels like I'm out of place 'cause they don't even really understand my background. And it's just like you take it for granted. When people see you and you have darker skin or something they'll automatically assume that you come from this certain background. But people see me and I have to explain my whole life because like I don't have like this one indicator or something. It's like a curse (Sarah, 20, Mexican American).

Sarah was atypical because she felt she has lighter skin than most of her Hispanic peers. This difference meant that many believed she was White, therefore, making it difficult to fit in with other Hispanic or minority peers because they thought of her as other. While conversations around white and multiracial identity are beyond the parameters of this research, the importance of 'passing' as white is important to address. Passing (shortened from 'passing for white'), once a concern to those interested in maintaining racial barriers, has now been rebranded as gaining acceptance into another social group (Lopez, 2003). Lopez (2003) surveyed American high school students of multiracial backgrounds and found that 64% identified with a 'one drop rule'—if one drop of their blood was black, they would identify as black rather than white. Alternatively, Burke and Kao (2013) argued that multiracial individuals who look white are more likely to self-identify as white. Self-identifying as white was not the case for Sarah. While she acknowledged having lighter skin (and could pass as white) she firmly reported her ethnicity as Hispanic, thus adopting the 'one drop rule'.

Michael (23, African American) addressed the topic of stereotyping individuals and how that influenced his sense of belonging. Michael was an African American male and 6 feet 4 inches tall. The overwhelming assumption by his peers was that he was attending the university as a result of an athletic scholarship. He said:

if I'm not an athlete, I'm someone that they are afraid of. And it's really not fun. Or I get that 'exotic' [label] especially from white women. It's kinda like 'you are this fun thing that gonna piss daddy off' and it's really, really annoying cause I'm never just ... I'm always something that's not me. Like something [is always] projected on me (Michael, 23, African American).

It is important to consider the complexity of Michael's experience as it related to the racialised and gendered positions of his peers. As Wright, Weekes, and McGlaughlin (2000) explain, each student constructs their own understandings of race/ethnicity, gender, and institutional *habitus* prior to attending university, and, as a result, their beliefs are projected onto their peers. Michael's experience

with the cultural idolisation of the black male in sports and the sexualisation of the male body are consistent with Mercer and Julien's (1995) arguments that black males are safe to occupy these realms (sport or the sexual savage), but university was outside their realm. Their argument was further demonstrated by testimony from Jessica:

one of my [peers], a white individual, says whenever she sees black students on campus and they do not have a backpack, she doesn't think that they are students—because obviously [if] you are black and you don't have a backpack you can't belong (Jessica, 21, Mexican).

Understanding the difficulties of race, skin colour, and stereotypes, Brandon and Michael spoke about putting on masks or being a chameleon in an attempt to fit in:

I feel like a chameleon because no matter where I go I am always changing the color of who I am (Brandon, 20, African American).

As a person of color you always have to put on these masks. You have to cater to the person that you are around, so with that being said, it's not that you are putting on these masks and you are a totally different person. You are still the same person; it's just that, you have to cater to that person you are around (Michael, 23, African American).

These testimonies are consistent with Edwards and Jones (2009), who described males putting on performances or metaphorically wearing a mask to meet expectations or conforming. This process played a tremendous part in both Michael's and Brandon's experience. It served to confuse their identities and created an inability to be fully authentic, which then resulted in feeling separated from their community. Although Goffman (1990a) argued that a mask can represent a truer self, the self we would like to be, it was clear that these participants used their masks to hide their true selves—to protect themselves from rejection.

While most of this section has focused on cultural capital relating to ethnic background, race, and skin colour, altering clothing and language were seen as

outward ways to fit into the university *habitus*. Many of the students became chameleons, like Brandon, by altering themselves in this way. Samantha, Michael, and Brandon all mentioned efforts to change their outward appearance. For instance, Samantha (21, Tibetan) explained that she used some of the money she had received as loans to update her wardrobe. This update was a response to seeing her peers. She explained:

it [taking out money] wasn't like such an immediate: 'I have to do it' but you know, subconsciously you know you want to take out money, so you can wear nice clothes and go out with your friends (Samantha, 21, Tibetan).

Brandon (22, African American) indicated that

I have this need to dress up and seem intelligent because you are combatting the fact that there are people here who do not want me here.

He was clear: although he dressed in a dress shirt, bow tie, nice trousers and matching socks, it was not to fulfil his true identity, but to be left alone.

Referring back to a statement Jessica made earlier in this section, regarding black males without backpacks, the statements by many of the Great Lake interviewees suggested that they felt they were intruders or, in the case of the black men interviewed, were dangerous. Michael (23, African American) described being hyper-aware of what it meant to be an African American male walking down the street in a predominately white neighbourhood ('Fraternity Row') and how he felt others perceive him:

living on [Frat Row] for the first year by myself and seeing how people just look at me and you don't know if they are look'en at you because, looking at you crazy cause like its 1 o'clock in the morning or looking at you cause you are a big black guy (Michael, 23, African American).

Michael would walk home after he finished working around one o'clock in the morning. He explained that when walking home many (of his white peers) would cross the street to avoid him. Merritt (2008) and Butler (2009)

separately explore the question of why the black man is feared in American society. Merritt (2008), a historian, traced the history of black civilization from ancient civilizations to the Obama presidency to better understand why white individuals have fear of black peers. He offered a series of possibilities, such as the worry of white inferiority, the narrative of the predatory black man since the days of slavery, revenge, or the result of whites constructing blacks as the Other. Butler (2009), however, examined how mass incarceration, the war on drugs, and the legal system all matter regarding how we construct our understanding of the black man and black culture. Returning back to Brandon (22, African American) and his bow tie, dressing in this manner was not 'typical' or how he perceived the typical student to dress. It could be argued that he dressed in this way to appear middle-class, harmless, and safe. By dressing in such a formal manner, he averted attention away from his blackness (and all the stereotypes of belonging or fear-inducing that his skin colour represented) and placed attention on his clothing. Unlike South Hadrian, where students dressed to fit in, Brandon dressed to stand out and divert attention away from his skin colour.

8.3 The culture of South Hadrian University

The South Hadrian participants all described the university culture in opposition to themselves. Words and phrases used to describe the typical student included, '*rahs*', '*lads*', '*posh*', '*from private schools*', '*wearing Barbour jackets*', '*middle-class, southern*', and '*rich*'. Adjectives that described the university itself were '*old fashioned*', '*elitist*', '*prestigious*', and '*rich*'. Chloe, Megan, and Thomas described the atmosphere as '*work hard, play hard*', '*social, and active*'. Although the students joined in the social and cultural events the campus had to offer, they were critical of their institution and their middle-class peers.

Hannah, Chloe, and Emily described how traditional students reflected the campus culture. Chloe (22, White English) explained that there was a running joke on campus—‘*the things you hear at [South Hadrian]*’. Chloe recalled:

someone overheard [a student] in Tesco panicking because there was no Brie left—you know, that’s [South Hadrian]! I guess people kind of like the fact that this university is like that and concerned with that [sort of thing] (Chloe, 22, White English).

To Hannah, Brie represented a good example of the divide between the ‘town and gown’, and it provided insight into the type of students the university attracted and the culture created as a result. Hannah felt that

when you walk through town sometimes and [students] are [dressed up] and there are single parents going to Tesco, and they are struggling to buy whatever they need for their families, and they have a 19-year-old dressed up in front of them, it’s a big kick in the teeth to be honest. One of my friends she said she went to Tesco’s and there was a student stood behind her with Brie and really expensive food and there was a local in front of her with like basic things, and you think, that’s not fair (Hannah, 20, White English).

Eight of the ten participants noticed that, because the university attracts middle-class students and was situated in a working-class region, the majority of students perceived the locals to be ‘*quite chavy*’. Hannah in particular recognised the intersection of social class, education, and perceived social status. She believed that the university *habitus* was middle-class, and that that mind set permeated how students interacted with the community. Hannah felt that most students thought locals to be

a bit rough, not educated, which they’re not. But at the end of the day you don’t have to be academic to do well. There are different types of intelligence and I don’t think they realise that. Because they’re at university they think everybody should be at university. It’s because they’re middle-class ... so they think middle-class about everything (Hannah, 20, White English).

It was this mind set that drove Emily (19, White English) to feel that '*the university is out of it in terms of understanding the needs of students like me*'.

Chloe agreed and described how intimidating formal meals (hosted by the university residence halls) could be for someone who had never eaten a 'posh dinner' that began with reciting Latin.

Jack (21, White Welsh) and Thomas (20, White English) presented an alternative viewpoint of the institutional *habitus*. They saw the university as a place encouraging diversity. In fact, to Jack, the ethnic diversity was one of the university's most desirable aspects. At the time of the interviews in 2013-2014, about 19% of the student population was from a non-white, diverse background ([South Hadrian] Student Registry, n.d.). To Jack and Thomas, diversity referred to the differences in ethnic representation. They did not mention social class difference in relation to campus diversity, even when asked directly. Although students worried about their own cultural difference, they were able to identify these differences and mimic these values and tastes in order to fit in.

Overall, the majority of the South Hadrian interviewees could break from social class stereotypes in order to be accepted into the elite campus culture. They did this by altering their accent and clothing. Chloe, Jack, Olivia, Thomas, and James all described their social class background as something other than the typical student who attended South Hadrian. Notably, Olivia (19, White English) described that while she was eager to join co-curricular activities cultural capital and social class affected her experience:

I went to the choir in the first week, 'cause I like singing and that's when [it] struck me. They were singing these songs [in Latin] and they all knew them. I was reading the music and everyone was like 'ohh I know this one cause I did it in school'. And (then) reciting Latin before meals was weird. [It] was a really weird experience (Olivia, 19, White English).

James, Olivia, and Hannah all discussed their peers' judgements of them in relation to social class and the north/south divide. Hannah admitted that,

despite being northern at a northern institution, she felt pressure to fit in with her southern peers:

I feel like I needed to tone it down a bit cause a lot of people go to private schools and things, they're really well brought up and really articulate whereas I feel, yes sometimes it's a bit drawing attention to yourself
(Hannah, 20, White English).

The perception that Hannah expressed regarding her peers' being '*brought up well*' reflects the understanding and presence of a social class hierarchy as well as the structure of cultural capital distribution (Bourdieu, 1973). Her testimony also supports the work of Lawler (2014) who argues that issues of 'taste' create class distinctions by marking the knowing and those unknowing. Often, working-class people are often thought to reproduce 'disgusting subjects' (p. 158). Identifying an individual's social class positioning can be done through their behaviour, accent, or dress. Skeggs (2005; 1997) used the term 'respectability' to explain that individuals learn self worth symbolically and which practices have social value. Both Skeggs and Lawler identified differences in social class tastes. Bourdieu argued that those with the most power select the cultural attributes that are most desirable. Thus, the middle-class are able to select not only which social class tastes are desirable (based on their own values), but also which working class values lack taste. By Hannah describing her peers as 'well brought up' it could be argued, she was articulating social class differences and her perception that she was lacking in these cultured qualities.

The South Hadrian participants spoke candidly about the act of changing their accents to fit in more with the dominant social groups. Charlotte even defined it as '*an invisible class line reflected in clothing, overall look, or accent*'. Several admitted that even though they attended a northern university, having a northern accent was in the minority and highly linked to their social class background. In order to fit in, both Chloe and Sophie adopted a southern accent (though they expressed that it was entirely intentional). Goffman (1990a) noted

that identity is a performance where an individual is either aware or unaware of whether the identity they are projecting is either an authentic or inauthentic self. Goffman (1959) also explored the relationships that individuals have with their audience (for the sake of this thesis, university peers). One of the central themes of his work is that performances are idealised with the intent to conform to cultural norms—to avoid becoming the Other (Calhoun *et al.*, 2012). Conforming to the middle-class cultural norms of the elite university was common amongst the South Hadrian participants. For instance, Hannah (20, White English) felt that she had *'picked up odd words and changed some pronunciation'*.

Changing one's accent to fit the social group was a common response from a lot of the participants—including Charlotte, Olivia, James, Megan, Chloe, and Hannah. Sophie's (19, White Northern Irish) adoption of middle-class values could indicate that she was perhaps 'the performer taken by [her] own act' (Calhoun *et al.*, 2012, p. 47). For example, the values Sophie hinted at included *'an appreciation for nicer things'*, such as Top Shop over Primark, wine over spirits, dressing up in gowns, and participating in the wine and cheese society. Nonetheless, she acknowledged that at home all of these values would be unacceptable to her working-class parents. This suggests that in fact, she was not 'taken by her own act', but performing. To Goffman (1959), life becomes a performance. On one hand, the performer can be immersed in their own act and generally believe that the identity they are projecting is in fact authentic. On the other hand, however, the performer may be cynical, not quite 'taken' by their act. One pitfall is if the performer is 'found out' or perceived to be a fraud by the audience (her university peers). Yet, Sophie's performance was identified by her family and pre-university friends not by her new university peers.

Dad was quick to say something about the snobs and such. I don't think it's true, I think that if I see people on the street back home I just say 'why aren't they doing something with themselves'. My dad's like 'you've become such a snob since you left'. Which I guess is kind of true. But I don't know (Sophie, 19, White Northern Irish).

This weekend I went over and stayed with my friend in Newcastle on Saturday, and as soon as I started talking to her mom she called me a 'posh twat' because my voice has changed. And so when I go home my friends are like you sound really posh, and I go back Northern again. Then I go back (to uni) and I sound southern, without knowing it. I've obviously tried to fit in without knowing it. So even though I joke about these rahs I've probably to an extent not aspired to be like [them], but I just so happen to have ... I've started to get the same values as them (Sophie, 19, White, Northern Irish).

Sophie, it could be suggested, equated her change in accent to a change in values. During her interview, it seemed Sophie was taken by her act and she felt a definite shift her not only her accent, but also her values.

Jack (21, White Welsh) distanced himself the furthest from his family background, and he was acutely aware of the stigma attached to the outward appearance (and social class stereotypes) that 'trackies' evoked. Jack spoke of his community and his parents as different to himself:

I think time will tell if [my parents] come to graduation and how they react to everything. I always joke that they'll show up in trackies. I've told them (not to wear trackies). They've been warned (Jack, 21, White Welsh).

Although Jack indicated that he 'jokes' that his parents will show up in trackies, he was quite serious when reporting the difference between his home community and university. To Jack, his background represented embarrassment—something that he had moved beyond. Butler's (1993) belief that role identity can be an unconscious or conscious effort to conform or rebel applies to many of the participants. Many of the participants displayed both unconscious and conscious efforts to perform. Their identity was something they did, not who they were. In Sophie's case, it is clear she was aware that she was in fact changing her accent and clothing in order to fit in the university culture.

Altering one's appearance represented another example of a conscious effort to fit in. According to Sophie,

I am more likely [now] to shop at Top Shop than Primark. Even just what I wear now. Like wearing [university] hoodies and knee high boots, leggings and a jumper has become a big thing. And I realise how many people wear it now. I think it's part of the [university] lifestyle. I would never wear that at home and I don't know why, you just get ... sucked into it (19, White Northern Irish).

Sophie was not the only student who disclosed that they changed their wardrobe to fit in. This was similar to Brandon at Great Lakes, who kept two wardrobes, one for university and one for home.

For James (21, White English) cultural difference was not related to accent or dress, but to the types of subjects discussed in conversations. He found that when speaking to his peers, it was, *'hard to communicate when you've had 20 years of very different things to talk about'*. The differences in prior experiences created a gulf between James and his university peers. Though once he became aware of this difference, he expressed that he found pride in his accent, his identity, and his *'Yorkshire roots'*. He explained that during the first several weeks of university his peers could not understand him due to his accent. James described that at first, his southern friends at university thought he was faking the accent until they visited James' family home. It was only then that his southern university friends understood his true accent. He described when a childhood and university friend met for the first time:

I am reminded when two of my friends met each other for the first time, one is a friend from home and the other is a southerner. We're having a good time, but all of a sudden the southerner goes very, very quiet. My Yorkshire friend leaves to get a drink, and my southern friend said 'I loved him for the first 10 minutes, and then you two started speaking a different language' (James, 21, White English).

The concept of 'becoming somebody' was presented in Ecclestone *et al.* (2010) as either a response to different life-events or a result from 'shifts and developments in identity and agency' (p. 7). Olivia (19, White English) could identify the cultural differences between herself and her wealthy peers (such as

knowledge of Latin, dress, and accent), but attending South Hadrian reinforced her perception that although she never attended private school, she '*felt like*' and saw herself as upper-working class. To Olivia, she was '*becoming*' what she perceived as her authentic self, well educated and culturally adept.

All of the students interviewed suggested that they felt a change in themselves as a result of attending an elite institution. Yet, many of the students consciously altered their accent and dress in order to fit into the dominant group. They performed. James identified with the *habitus* of the university, and yet, the cultural difference of language (mentioned above) led James to identify more strongly with his roots:

As I came [to university], I found a deep pride for my Yorkshire accent, so part of me wanted to preserve that. I'm aware it's gone more or less, but I've done quite a lot of weird and wonderful things during my time [here at university] and for me I am incredibly glad. I am proud of it because a lot of it is intrinsic to me. It's who I am and I've met a place that holds a lot of the ethos that I do. My heritage was: if your family were miners, you accepted your life as a miner. There were no, 'I'm going to work my way out of the pits' (James, 21, White English).

Despite his Yorkshire background, by attending an elite university James felt that he had been afforded the opportunity to do something beyond the traditional experience of men his age from his neighbourhood. James was not alone in this experience. Although across the students interviewed, some spoke more in terms of making choices, none of the South Hadrian participants reported any restrictions on their ability to choose. Although the students commented that their parents did remind them of their 'place', each were free to become the type of students (and the type of individual) they envisioned. This sense of freedom was unique to the students at South Hadrian. Furthermore, these students were able to negotiate the elite university *habitus*. Their ability was the strongest of all the student interviewees across the three jurisdictions. One reason for this was indicated in chapter 6. Overall, the students at South Hadrian were the most financially stable. Another, and perhaps more important, reason for their negotiation of university *habitus* would be to once again

consider cultural reproduction and production. All of the South Hadrian students could identify the ways in which they did not ‘fit’ in with the *habitus*, and yet each actively engaged in actively reproducing the university culture rather than challenging it. Willis described that the working-class lads he interviewed ‘rarely identify any deep causes for the changes they describe so vividly’ (1977, p. 61). If cultural production is the result of social conditioning as Willis argued, many of the participants described their sense of actively producing culture, and yet, they were actually involved in reproducing existing culture. This production of culture seems to suggest that the structures, boundaries, and traditions determine the *habitus* of elite universities, not the student body.

8.4 The culture of Antonine University

The participants at Antonine, overall, seemed surprised and greatly disappointed that they did not fit in with the university culture. The interviewees often described the university *habitus* in terms of both the institution itself as well as what they felt were common cultural characteristics of their peers. For instance, the participants used words like ‘*international*’ (Ryan) or ‘*English students*’ (Emma, Rebecca, Amy, Ryan, and Rachel); ‘*from middle-class, rich, elite private schools*’ (Emma, Rachel, Rebecca); and ‘*highly academic*’ (Andrew). Several students referred to the middle-class English females as ‘*Yas*’—nicknamed, they explained, for supposedly greeting their peers with ‘*yas darling*’. Ryan (19, White Scottish) voiced that he found the main student demographic to be, ‘*Londoners, English [particularly] southeast England is where a lot of people [come from], but just a lot of toffs. They really speak posh*’. Rachel felt that her university was known for

typical sort of big hair, Barbour jacket, Hunter boots type of students. So the typical student of [this university] is probably a posh student, but it’s also majorly international. Ohh and Yas, [they] would have a typical accent I think which is like a ... posh English accent (Rachel, 22, White Scottish).

The students at Antonine agreed that the university attracted a certain demographic of middle-class English and international students. However the 2014/2015 student figures published by Antonine present a different student body to that which the interviewees described. Overall, 38% of the undergraduate population identified as Scottish, 27% were from the rest of the UK (rUK), and 33% were either from the EU (11%) or overseas (22%). Thus, the student body consisted of roughly one-third Scottish, one-third rUK, and one-third internationals. Yet, the students overwhelmingly perceived the campus culture to be English. David (25, White Scottish), for instance, said he had expected the university to be '*more Scottish*', but he could not define how being Scottish would manifest itself in the university's culture.

Research published by Clarke and Garner (2010) on white American and British identities determined that Scotland, Wales, and Ireland retained their strong Celtic identities, yet these identities were 'often expressed as a cry of frustration and inequality' (p. 72). They concluded that overall identification in Britain was complicated because English individuals felt that Englishness was problematic because it could be constructed as nationalistic and, in some instances, xenophobic. For the Scottish students, it could be argued that their feelings of 'otherness' at Antonine were a reaction to two things: their Scottish identity and social class. This feeling of frustration and inequality in an elite Scottish university would support the work of Clarke and Gardner (2010), but students whom the participants perceived to be English rather than Scottish most likely were fitting into campus culture, not due to their national origin, but due to their social class background. Upon reflection, a good follow-up question would have been the following: could the individuals you feel are middle-class English in fact be middle-class Scottish? This would have provided great context as to whether the participants were reacting to nationality or social class.

The students interviewed for this study acknowledged that they were not the 'typical student' most thought the university had a 'quota' for people like

themselves. The idea of a university quota was expressed by several of the students:

You hear a lot I've heard that the Scottish government gives sort of money to the universities to take more Scottish students than English students and stuff like that, and the universities want to take all the students who pay tuition fees and a lot of us [Scottish] don't (Ryan, 19, White Scottish).

The underrepresented students at Antonine were genuinely convinced that their university had quotas and perhaps more surprising that the working-class students were defined as 'Scottish', whereas this middle-class or wealthy students were defined as 'English' or 'International'. For Emma (35, White Scottish), the feeling of isolation was reinforced by the impression that those who enter by way of a university access course are admitted despite (not because of) their academic abilities:

It's a very, very widely held belief, that's actually ... I attended a Summer School place, a 'get to know university before you come' and the person who taught it says, 'yes, [Antonine] university does have a quota and you, you are very lucky to have your place here'. And that was the tutor! The first face at the university was saying that (Emma, 35, White Scottish).

Emma confirmed when asked again that it was a university employee who told the students that they were enrolled due to a quota. This understanding of how one enters university has a significant effect on how they perceive not only their own academic abilities, but also the culture of the university. It is important to note that all student applicants must meet the minimum entrance requirements set by the college or department. Since the Scottish Government pays the fees for Scottish-domiciled students, the Government has to limit the amount of places awarded to Scottish-domiciles at Antonine (and other Scottish universities).

It is important to consider the feelings of Emma. Ball and Vincent (2001) argued that because elite universities were implementing widening participation initiatives, students (and academic staff) in the middle class felt that they were

being 'assailed by intruders from below' (p. 184). This fear, or perhaps the understanding of social boundaries and one's place (Savage, Bagnall & Longhurt, 2005; Marsh, 2005), could offer a possible explanation as to why the word 'quota' was used. The tutor at Antonine appeared to credit Emma's acceptance (and to some extent academic ability) to a quota, passing judgement on her ability. Although Emma did not accept the 'quota' as her creation, she still experienced shame. This shame, it could be argued, affected their ability to feel part of the university environment and perpetuated feelings of exclusion.

Issues such as social exclusion, economic limitations, and family responsibilities served to generate and perpetuate the feelings of exclusion. While Emma felt lucky to be enrolled, she believed that she did not fit in with her peers. She reported that,

this isn't where I am supposed to be. I don't fit in. I don't belong. I'm old enough to be these kids' mums. They're just so completely different, very different from me [laughs]. But at the same time, saying to myself: 'You've got just as much right to be here'. Yes I try to give myself some sound advice (Emma, 35. White Scottish).

Emma's experience with feeling excluded from extracurricular activities and study groups was consistent with Christie *et al.* (2005) and Christie's (2009) arguments that 'day' students often see their university experience fitting in with the daily 9am to 5pm rhythm. Emma commented that

everything happens at night time. And quite often you only get a day [or two days] notice, so it's impossible. I can't arrange childcare. So I genuinely feel I am disadvantaged. Really, I miss out on a lot (Emma, 35, White Scottish).

Although Christie (2009) argued that 'day' students were not open to making friends, Emma's case suggested the contrary that in fact she was very open to making friends and felt very isolated without them. Because 80.8% of undergraduate entrants at Antonine were under 21 years of age ([Equality

Monitoring Committee], 2014), mature students, like Rebecca, were mistaken for a professional, not a student:

I walked into my social work exam and the guy at the desks says to me 'are you sitting the exams or are you [invigilating]?' I said I am sitting this exam. And I think he saw a mature student and thought she must be [invigilating] (Rebecca, 40, White Scottish).

Rebecca's experience further demonstrated how traditional norms (including the traditional age of students) drove individual expectations. The 18-25 year old demographic was more common and, therefore, read as normal. Anyone beyond the traditionally expected age was considered an outsider and did not belong. This idea of belonging was also demonstrated by Jessica's story at Great Lakes regarding a black man with a backpack.

Despite Andrew being traditional age, the university experience was different to what he had expected. Attending university was,

my first experience being in a city. I don't think I can ever see myself staying [here] long-term. I was not prepared for... all these different things and again nobody prepared us for it. I think that there's a view [that] when you get to school, they try and prepare you for your first year. They say: 'by the end of the first year you've made friends, you're doing this, you're loving it'. Which a lot of people do, but then there are also some people who don't. So they're thinking [certainly I was] 'I should be enjoying this! What am I doing wrong that I am not enjoying it?' And there's very little support because obviously university is very much a kind of student life thing, and you have to do a lot of it yourself. So it's something that did pose a lot of social barriers that I suppose I wasn't expecting to happen. I don't think I fully considered how challenging university was going to be not just academically but socially as well, going away from home (Andrew, 20, White Scottish).

Andrew's experience fitting in represented the general transition into adulthood and was not unique to the underrepresented student experience. Hussey and Smith (2010) and Holdsworth (2006) argued that since a student's transition is not linear and the timing of transition were not precise, each individual feels the effects of transition at different times and to varying degrees. All students

interviewed at Antonine experienced university as something different than what they had experienced previously. In all, only Amy and David indicated that they felt they fit in. The rest recorded issues pertaining to feeling older or anonymous; being the only one from his neighbourhood and feeling out a place, doubting their intelligence (which could be common amongst all students), or feeling as though they were '*common*'.

The Antonine participants vocalised the importance of remaining firmly rooted in their Scottish, working-class backgrounds. For example, David (25, White Scottish) indicated that he resented his upper-class peers and felt as though he maintained his 'poverty mentality'—a sentiment shared by Emma—even after attending an elite university. David's experience was similar to that of James (21, White British) at South Hadrian. Although Antonine was situated in a large community, a community far larger than where Andrew was raised, his identity was strongly tied to being a '*country lad*'. This aspect of his identity had a fundamental effect on his ability to transition and fit in. Yet, he expressed worry that he was leaving his friends and family behind by attending university. This worry represented the push/pull effect that the Great Lakes participants also experienced. Andrew's experience of adjusting to a different locality was similar to the students from the inner city transitioning to a small city (where Great Lakes is located).

Those who indicated that they felt they belonged did so due to their strong connection with their academic study and the establishment of a learner identity. For Amy and David, finding the right field of study was essential to feeling part of the wider university. Amy (25, White Scottish) felt confident to participate in her courses in primary education and confessed that she was the most outspoken in each of her courses. Although David (25, White Scottish) felt that he did not fit in with his peers, he became active in the field of ecology (through the Botanical Society and working with academic staff). This served as a connection between himself and the university. Those connections helped to alleviate the need for social peer-to-peer relations. During her second year,

Emma like Emily (at South Hadrian), was starting to feel more relaxed and at home with the university. She would not say she fitted in, but was starting to enjoy her coursework and felt connected to the university as a learner.

Rachel described her background as '*common*' and, therefore, she felt as though she was common compared to all of the '*posh*' students. She admitted that a typical question among first-year students was 'what school did you attend?'—something she did not expect. Rachel stated that attending university would serve to demonstrate her self-worth (socially), and attending an elite university further proved a person's worth.

Despite the resentment or personal hardship, every student was proud to attend Antonine. This was not the case at the other two universities. Like Rachel, Amy felt she was '*secretly vain*' because she enjoyed the praise she received for her academic achievements. Overall, while the Scottish students indicated issues of transition and fitting in, they remained steadfast in their roots. Despite being asked the same series of questions as asked at Great Lakes and South Hadrian, none of the Antonine participants indicated the desire to change their accent, clothing, or their mannerisms to fit in.

8.5 Conclusion

Participants from each university were clear they each experienced a clash between their culture and the university's *habitus*. In line with Christie *et al.* (2008), these findings suggest that underrepresented students work with 'distinctive', class-based, and racialised understandings of what it means to belong to a community. Although some (particularly at South Hadrian) tried to engage with the 'proper' and 'elite' student life activities, participants at Great Lakes and Antonine reported feeling disconnected, and all thirty participants described the university *habitus* in opposition to themselves. The differences between themselves and the institutional *habitus* caused difficulty in the

students' transition to (and fitting into) their universities. Clear from the interviews was the perception that middle-class culture drove elite universities' *habitus*. At Great Lakes, it was a middle-class, white culture, whereas at South Hadrian and Antonine it was middle-class, English culture that drove the *habitus*. The data collected in this study suggests that some of the students interviewed reproduced the existing culture to fit in with the institutional *habitus*.

The Scottish students tended to adhere more to their existing forms of cultural capital and identity. This caused the participants to feel like they did not fit in or belong. Furthermore, the three mature students at Antonine felt distanced from the university as a result of comments made by a university staff member regarding Antonine's filling a 'quota'.

The South Hadrian respondents acknowledged cultural differences between themselves and the institution. In fact, Hannah believed that the middle-class mindset permeated the culture. To Charlotte the *habitus* was '*an invisible class line*' that was reflected in the students' appearance. Because of this, many consciously changed their accents or dress to fit in with their peers. Testimony from the students on altering their accent and dress supports Goffman's (1959; 1990a) work that identity is, in fact, a performance. Despite the outward changes to assimilate, many of the students felt that they were 'becoming somebody' by attending an elite institution. This concept of 'becoming somebody' supports the work of Ecclestone *et al.* (2010).

Great Lakes participants centred their discussions of cultural capital on ethnic background, race, and dress. All twelve of the Great Lakes participants expressed some worry pertaining to ethnic background, race, or skin colour as each factor affected their ability to assimilate into the campus culture. They could not transcend their cultural capital, as it related to ethnic background or race, to develop new forms of capital. In fact, the worries of race were compounded by social class background and poverty (see chapter 6). In

particular, Michael's experience of stereotypes and his ability to belong corroborates the work of Mercer and Julien (1995), that black males are safe to occupy certain realms such as sport, but are considered out of place in middle-class spaces, such as higher education. To cope, students had to perform. Their performance supports Edwards and Jones' (2009) small study that described males metaphorically putting on masks in order to meet others' expectations placed on them.

Perhaps the most important conclusion here relates to an individual's ability to develop new forms of capital. Overall, the South Hadrian students were most free to develop new forms of cultural capital and identity. The restrictions of cultural origin, ethnic background, race, and stereotypes did not seem to impede their ability to fit in (as they did for Great Lakes and Antonine participants). Both Great Lakes and Antonine participants experienced how different aspects of cultural capital can create a compounding effect on inequality. In the American case, race, stereotypes, and socioeconomic status served to compound, making the ability to fit in very difficult. Despite attempts to modify clothing, mannerisms, accents, and language, for the student participants at Great Lakes, transcending their existing cultural capital was nearly impossible due to their skin colour, the physical expression of their race. In the case of Antonine, the mature students not only felt excluded from co-curricular activities (see Christie, 2009 on 'day students'), but also experienced the effects of social class and national identity difference. Thus, despite pressures to conform to the universities' *habitus*, participants at Great Lakes and Antonine adhered to existing forms of cultural capital and identity.

Chapter 9: Conclusions

9.1 Overview of the thesis

This thesis aimed to understand the underrepresented student experience from those who managed to gain access into elite universities. The hope throughout this study was that by learning from their experiences, it could shed light on how we can assist greater numbers of underrepresented students at elite universities. The historical context of the US and UK has shaped national policies as well as the social and cultural characteristics used to identify individuals as underrepresented in higher education. Historically, 'highly structured and hierarchical systems' of education were established long ago, but higher education alters the life chances and future privileges of its attendees from traditionally disadvantaged backgrounds (Schultz, 1961; Portes, 1998; Lin, 2000; Simon, 2005; Li *et al.*, 2008; See *et al.*, 2012). Chapters 2 and 5 included discussions pertaining to the barriers and boundaries that exclude individuals from education. These barriers create social markers and remind individuals of their place, but higher education has primarily been an institution for the middle class (Entwistle, 1978). These barriers were explored in three ways: economic, social, and cultural capital. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 examined how the experiences of the thirty students interviewed were shaped by their ability to access economic, social, and cultural capital.

Overall, I have achieved what I set out to do—to begin to understand the varied and complex nature of the underrepresented student experience in elite higher education. Throughout the thesis, I have endeavoured to keep the student voice at the forefront, as I believe that undergraduates have the capacity to reflect on their own lives and experiences. The importance of their voices was reflected in the methodological approach as well as the method of analysis.

9.2 Contribution to knowledge and understanding of widening participation

Four key findings resulted from this study. The first key finding was that, while economic capital is a barrier to university, for the students featured in this study, finance also represented a barrier to securing social and cultural capital once enrolled. The students' inability to purchase food from the cafeteria or participate in university social events led to feelings of exclusion. Second, students from the poorest backgrounds were also the most debt adverse. This aversion led to their working nearly full-time hours or taking extreme measures regarding their monthly budget. The third key finding was that the students who were able to minimise their social and cultural differences, for instance by changing their clothing or accent, were more likely to report fitting in. In the US, the students reported, in some instances, that their inability to hide their ethnic background had a significant effect on their sense of belonging. The fourth key finding was that, although policy agendas focus predominately on economic disadvantage and access, very little attention is given to the *habitus* of elite universities, which perpetuates privilege and complicates feelings of belonging. The following sections synthesise the different approaches each university took to widen participation, and how economic, social, and cultural capital affected the student experience.

9.2.1 Widening participation initiatives at Great Lakes, South Hadrian, and Antonine

In examining the jurisdictions, it became clear that each differed in the ways in which widening participation was regulated and which indicators were used, thereby providing slight differences in who was considered underrepresented. The US, England, and Scotland, however, have many more similarities than differences in their efforts to widen participation. All three countries saw an expansion to higher education following the Second World War, but that expansion did not sufficiently eliminate participation inequality (Schuetze & Slowey, 2002; Boliver, 2013). Specifically, although policies aimed to increase

participation in all three jurisdictions, they did not consider the social and cultural aspects that act as potential barriers to underrepresented groups. Overall, two main findings suggest that the ways in which the three universities identified and provided university access to and integrated underrepresented groups differed, thus affecting the student experience in different ways.

The first finding identified that the challenges affecting underrepresented groups were more about university priorities and *habitus* than students' lacking financial resources. The three widening participation officers interviewed for this thesis differed in their understandings of how their universities' *habitus* affected the student experience. For instance, the Assistant Dean (Great Lakes) and Head of Widening Participation (Antonine) understood and expressed that middle-class, white norms organised everything on their campus (Butler, 2015). These norms had a large effect on the campus *habitus*, and the ability for their underrepresented students to fit in. To the Assistant Dean, the *habitus* was one of the key factors affecting the widening participation effort at his university. This suggests, perhaps unsurprisingly, that having leaders of widening participation programmes who themselves are from underrepresented group, provides a greater knowledge of the difficulties facing their targeted student population. Additionally, while both the Assistant Dean and Head of Widening Participation could articulate the social and cultural challenges faced by their underrepresented population, that did not equate to those challenges being addressed by the university. For instance, although many efforts of inclusion centred on increasing the amount of underrepresented students admitted (instead of addressing the lack of belonging) the Assistant Dean felt the university was failing to support its students. Great Lakes' pipeline programme is working and they are in fact enrolling more students. They also have put in place a student support programme with advising, a tutorial centre, and programme activities, and yet this same programme is inadvertently causing a pattern of isolation. This outcome suggests two things. First, while these programmes are designed to support their minority students, they have the potential to limit students' interaction with the wider majority population.

Second, the university as a whole has not adopted a university-wide approach to systematically ensure the inclusion and integration of its minority students.

The distinguishing characteristic at South Hadrian was that, despite its access courses and pipeline programmes to assist students in gaining entry, the office relied on the structures of the university to support the widening participation students. This was largely effective because it integrated the targeted students into the majority population. Due to the Head of Access's having very little contact with his students after admission, he was largely unaware of the social and cultural aspects affecting his students. But, this fact suggests how strong the culture was at South Hadrian. Even the widening participation office wanted to welcome their target group with wine and cheese.

South Hadrian and Antonine are bound by state regulations to widen participation, and are provided with very specific measurements. Nevertheless, all three institutions saw difficulties with the government measures employed to identify widening participation students. In fact, the widening participation officers at Great Lakes, South Hadrian, and Antonine explained that their institutions replaced national widening participation measures with their own initiatives. For instance, South Hadrian substituted the measure of POLAR with ACORN, in order to replace an 'inaccurate' measurement. One of the reasons behind this replacement could stem from each institution having a less than positive outcome when government measures were used. All three universities resisted government policies, perhaps because elite universities 'create knowledge', and, therefore, are less likely to conform to national movements. Although these universities have adopted (to varying degrees) national initiatives regarding widening participation, they 'jealously guard' the prestige and autonomy that perpetuate their status (Smelser, 1993). A key finding, therefore, is that while the policy agenda focuses mostly on economic disadvantage, policy does not suggest elite universities focus on, acknowledge, or address their *habitus*.

9.2.2 The student experience: economic capital

Across the three institutions, the respondents felt less able to participate in events (such as clubs, formals, and socialising) than did their wealthier peers. This affected their ability to make social connections, and contributed to their feeling left out and excluded. One of the key findings in this study was that lacking in accessible economic capital for these students did not affect their ability to access an elite institution, but rather it limited their ability to 'feel' like a university student. This thesis demonstrates that a lack of ability to access economic capital translated into two outcomes: being priced out or needing to work long hours. Both had exclusionary outcomes. Mumper (2003) stated that widening participation policy and the overall decrease of financial support are fundamentally competing agendas. The findings here acknowledge and agree with Mumper's (2003) argument, but financial aid in the US and loans in the UK simply do not factor in 'experience', only tuition and housing. Yet, because funding packages are available, the widening participation students were able to enrol in higher education; however, the lack of additional economic capital meant that the students were unable to take part fully in activities, purchase books, or socialise—all activities thought to be part of the typical undergraduate experience. So, it seems that widening participation is concerned with access as demonstrated through the availability of loans and grants, but consideration is not made for the co-curricular types of university experiences. Furthermore, funding has nothing to do with the prices universities set in their cafeterias or student unions. One key finding specific to the Great Lakes context, therefore, was that students reported the prices at the union and cafeteria to be so high that these students were priced out. The Great Lakes participants reported feeling guilt and resentment because of their inability to access the economic capital they needed.

Participants at each institution reported feelings of guilt and resentment. For some at Great Lakes, guilt stemmed from watching their families struggle, while they felt relatively financially secure. Students who identified as impoverished expressed greater feelings of guilt than their more advantaged peers. All the

student participants believed that their 'traditional' peers had the ability to ask their families for financial support, but the students' interviews for this thesis expressed that they had no such financial safety net. The lack of safety net led some to resent their peers. David (Antonine) and Jessica (Great Lakes) experienced these feelings. For Ashley (Great Lakes), *'it was harder to be poor on campus because of how much it costs to live'*. Although students had access to financial support, their inability to purchase food from the universities' unions or cafeterias resulted in feelings of resentment and shame. Glass and Nygreen (2011) argue that the concept of 'college for all' is an illusion and that universities fail to acknowledge the class hierarchies that shape the culture. The work of Sennett and Cobb (1977) can also be applied here. They argue that an individual defines themselves in society in relation to others, and that students' inability to take part in 'normal' university life can create feelings of shame and resentment.

Across all three institutions all students felt that they could not take part in all university events on offer due to the prohibitive costs. Their economic, social, and cultural exclusion often led to feelings of inferiority compared to their majority peers. The Great Lakes students exhibited the most aversion to debt. This aversion could be a result of their socioeconomic position. Ten of the twelve students were working long hours, on top of their full-time academic schedules. This amount of work led to the students' inability to become involved in co- or extracurricular activities, further supporting the key finding that a lack of economic capital was not a barrier to university itself, but rather a barrier to experiencing the social side of university.

There was a substantial difference pertaining to the part-time hours employed between students attending Great Lakes and those at South Hadrian and Antonine. One important outcome was that term-time employment did not reduce debt anxiety. Employed students were more aware of their finances and, therefore, had a better understanding of the debt burden they were assuming. A key difference between individuals from low socioeconomic backgrounds and

those with access to economic capital is the type of employment considered. South Hadrian participants indicated that they were employed only during summer or took part in Curriculum Vitae building experiences such as volunteering or internships. Collectively, they also expressed the least concern regarding their debt but recorded the greatest expected debt amount. The amount of hours the Great Lakes participants were employed is one reason why their debt burdens were lower than their UK peers'. It is important to note that their reported debt amounts were much lower than the average US student. The US Department of Education (2014) estimates that the average undergraduate will incur about \$24,000 of debt; however, because the Great Lakes students' financial packages were combinations of tuition exemptions (resulting from participation in pipeline programmes), employment, grants, and bursaries, their average was much lower. The data published by the Department of Education would suggest that Elizabeth (\$40,000) and Michael (\$30,000) are more representative of the debt burden felt by American undergraduates.

At the institutional level, all three universities have moved to a shared-cost model of higher education whereby the burdens of financial loans are shared between the student and the taxpayer. In Scotland, however, while students are not incurring tuition fees, they are taking on maintenance loans. This contrasts with the US and England as university students in these countries take on both tuition fee loans and maintenance loans. Callender (2003) argued that student attitudes toward debt influenced their attendance, but the data collected here demonstrates something different. Although some of the participants were fearful of debt, that fear did not keep them from attending university. Indeed, in the case of the South Hadrian participants, most did not understand or even acknowledge their debt. Interestingly, although South Hadrian students proportionally took on the most debt, they were either 'not bothered by' or did not view their tuition fee loans as debt in the first place.

9.2.3 *The student experience: social capital*

It is important to acknowledge that, despite efforts to widen participation, social class boundaries still exist and dictate who belongs in higher education. For instance, Emma (Antonine) suggested that higher education was ‘not for the likes of us’. This understanding of who belongs affected how Emma understood herself in relation to her peers. Her sense of belonging was exacerbated by the experience she and others had as access course participants, especially when a tutor suggested that the university ‘held back places’ for individuals from the Antonine community. Feelings of isolation and stigmatisation for some of the students impeded their ability to fit in not only with their peers, but also with the wider university *habitus*. Overall, the participants who identified as being from the poorest backgrounds (Brandon, Michael, Taylor in the US; Emma and David in Scotland) expressed having fewer social ties and used phrases such as ‘feeling alone’ and ‘lone wolf’ to describe their lack of social networks. As discussed above, the UK universities are focused on access, but a key issue raised by this study is whether stigmatising students by identifying them with the ‘widening participation’ classification outweighs the social networks that might be gained as a result of having a community of people with similar experiences. By identifying the widening participation students to each other, perhaps students like Emma and David would feel more accepted and socially included.

One of the most important findings of this thesis related to South Hadrian. Despite the university’s being culturally, socially, and economically exclusive, the underrepresented students felt that they fit into the university. All of the first-year students lived together in university housing (and many returned in their final year). They slept, ate, socialised, and studied together. As a result, the underrepresented students became ‘respectable’ to their middle-class peers (Skeggs, 2005). Skeggs’ (2005) term ‘respectability’ is very important because the participants in this study felt that their peers accepted them and included them in many middle-class activities. In contrast, neither the Great Lakes nor Antonine students reported feeling ‘respectable’. By being included in activities

such as the wine and cheese society, dances, and formal meals, the South Hadrian participants experienced more social inclusion than did their peers from the other two institutions. It could be argued that because the students lived, ate, and socialised with their middle-class peers, they learned social practices that would be advantageous to their fitting in. Especially interesting is that this sense of belonging was a result of wider university support systems available to all students (such as residentially-driven welcome week activities and residential tutors) rather than the widening participation office.

9.2.4 The student experience: cultural capital and institutional habitus

All thirty participants from each university were clear that they experienced a clash between their own culture and the university's *habitus*. A key finding relating to cultural capital was that social and cultural structures apply more strongly to more easily visible characteristics such as race, than they do to slightly less overt characteristics, such as social class. Social and cultural capital, therefore, are more easily transcended when the visibility of characteristics can be minimised. Accordingly, this thesis contributes to the scholarly understanding of performing to hide one's true self (Edward & Jones, 2009; Butler, 1993; Goffman, 1959). If an underrepresented student can alter or perform their identity by changing their clothing, accent, or to some extent beliefs, then they are more able to transcend their old self and fit into an elite university.

South Hadrian students were most likely to fit in as a result of performing their identity through changing their northern accents. Due to the small residential communities at South Hadrian, the pressure to conform was so strong that those who performed were more likely to express a sense of belonging. The performance also contributed to the belief of 'becoming somebody' and becoming a more authentic self. To Olivia (South Hadrian), by performing, she was 'becoming' her more authentic self—well educated and culturally adept. Yet, at Antonine and Great Lakes the outcome was quite different. Several male students at Great Lakes reported putting on performances, becoming

chameleons, or metaphorically wearing a mask to meet expectations or to conform. Brandon (Great Lakes) spoke about his family's long bouts of homelessness and how he masked his social class background by his dress. He actively over-dressed (dress shirt, bow tie, nice trousers) in order to fit into his elite university and transcend the racial stereotypes placed on black men. It is important to note, however, that by changing his dress (and to some extent beliefs) this served to confuse his identity and created an inability to be fully authentic, resulting in feelings of separation from his own community and the university. In essence, Brandon was doing what the South Hadrian students were doing: mimicking and performing a middle-class identity. Brandon performed in order to transcend racial stereotypes and draw attention away from his blackness and poverty—to demonstrate that he in fact belonged. His testimony served as a concentrated example of how the pressure to conform at a middle-class elite university is expressed.

Overall, the Great Lakes participants expressed some worry that their skin colour affected their ability to assimilate into the campus culture. The worries of race were magnified by their social class background and poverty. To cope with the racialised understandings of ability that drove belonging, students had to perform (Edwards & Jones, 2009). Regardless of their performance, the Great Lakes students were unable to transcend their cultural capital due to the limiting boundaries of their race. Thus, my research suggests that, according to dominant norms, Michael (Great Lakes) could occupy the part of the sportsman or the sexual savage (Mercer and Julien, 1995), but not a university student, just as Rebecca (Antonine) could be employed by the university, but was not the acceptable age to be a student. These attitudes were due to their elite universities' being a realm already occupied by traditional-aged, middle-class, white individuals.

The Scottish students were most likely to adhere to their existing forms of cultural capital and identity. Despite being asked the same series of questions, none of the Antonine participants indicated the desire to change their accent,

clothing, or mannerisms to fit in. The Scottish participants were reluctant to change their identity. Identity in the Antonine case was closely linked to nationality and their social class positioning. It could be argued that nationality is expressed in many different ways including native language, accent, dress, and skin colour. Individuals who feel as though they are outside their own nation (or are in a nation they feel is dominating their own) tend to hold onto their national identity more closely. Yet, students whom the participants perceived to be English rather than Scottish most likely were fitting into the *habitus* as a result of their social class background, not their national origin.

Finally, it is important to consider an individual's ability to develop new forms of capital. The South Hadrian students appeared most able to develop new forms of cultural capital and identity. The restrictions of social class, socioeconomic background, cultural origin, ethnic background, race, or stereotypes did not impede most of their ability to fit in. The South Hadrian participants were aware of the 'running joke' on campus, 'the things you hear at South Hadrian'. These 'things' consisted of students 'panicking' at Tesco because the store had run out of Brie. They were aware of the division between the university and 'the locals', or the experience of singing Latin in choir, but all discussed the pressure to fit in. Jack (21, White Welsh) actively distanced himself from his 'trackie- wearing' parents. He was acutely aware of the social class stereotypes and stigma attached to trackies, and made a conscious effort to rebel against his social class background. When asked about the culture at South Hadrian, a couple of students described it as 'historic' or 'traditional', which suggests that the *habitus* drove everything from living arrangements, to the food eaten, to the activities available to students. Because of the widespread nature of the *habitus*, one could argue that the minority group had no choice but to conform. Ultimately, they could identify the ways in which they could conform, and since their difference (in this case social class background) can be hidden by changing accents and dress, the participants were more able to fit it. Additionally, the performance of class is easier than the performance of race,

because race is an outward expression of ‘difference’, whereas social class is an inward ‘difference’.

9.3 Academic development

I have learned about the complexities of how higher education has expanded since the early twentieth century and how this expansion has driven conversations on the social characteristics of students included—and those excluded. The policies of widening participation and structures of university financing were far more complicated (and more in flux) than I had previously imagined. Through examining these policies I have developed an understanding of the boundaries and hierarchies (in each nation) that actively, but quietly, exclude certain individuals. When I commenced this research, I thought there would be significant differences in policy, initiatives, and financing structures across the countries, but I was wrong. Overall, I have learned how similar the US and the UK are despite using their different terminology to describe their efforts. Although the primary cultural boundaries facing each population are quite different, the result is the same: social, cultural, economic, and educational exclusion. I was surprised by how elite culture was constantly reproduced at each institution. The culture was identifiable to each participant, but the students reported either conforming to or withdrawing from that culture. None reported the desire to change the culture.

I have also learned how universities unintentionally reproduce social and cultural advantage. Despite varying policies and approaches to widen participation, all three institutions examined in this thesis are under immense pressure to recruit students from widening participation backgrounds (however defined in each jurisdiction). Moreover, Great Lakes, South Hadrian, and Antonine understand themselves in a global context, in which institutional rankings in league tables, research funding, and publications drive prestige. A tension exists between widening participation initiatives and efforts to score

highly in research and teaching. Because of this pressure, and although more individuals are entering higher education, those from underrepresented backgrounds continue to attend less prestigious institutions (Chowdry *et al.*, 2008). This situation stems from difficulties in tackling the larger, structural inequalities (like social, cultural, and economic capital or race) that create systemic disparity within a stratified higher education system.

Finally, my knowledge of theoretical frameworks regarding capital, race, and identity has grown considerably. I have learned that concepts such as identity, race, and social class are all socially constructed through complex and varied understandings of social expectations and interactions (Ecclestone *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, these social constructs contribute to or limit choice because of constraints imposed on individuals. I have also gained a deeper understanding of how social advantage (and disadvantage) are maintained by middle- and upper-class needs to preserve power and control (Bourdieu, 1986). Social and cultural capital are instruments used to maintain and secure advantage (Bourdieu, 1993). Thus, without addressing the larger, systemic social boundaries and hierarchies, educational policy to widen participation at elite institutions will continue to prove less than fully effective.

9.4 Implications

This thesis is a comparative international study examining how thirty students from underrepresented groups experienced their elite universities. This study considered how widening participation policy and finances affect the underrepresented student experience, and the social characteristics that classify and measure students. I endeavoured to understand the similarities and differences across these institutions, and to understand how policy translates into institutional initiatives. My work has made those connections, and implies several key areas where similarities exist across the jurisdictions. Furthermore, my work suggests that jurisdictional and institutional policy initiatives fall short

in addressing issues pertaining to fitting in and university *habitus*. A further implication is that underrepresented students who attend one of these institutions have varying levels of social and cultural capital that they can leverage creating an uneven experience. University *habitus* is also a contributing factor in how students connected with the university, and whether they felt that they belonged. Beyond the students' negative feelings, however, was the belief that attending university would ultimately benefit their future. As a result, twenty-nine of thirty felt that they would attend the university if given another chance. An overall implication, therefore, is that, despite the difficulties of economics, social networks, identity, and so forth, the total benefit of a university degree, to these students, was still seen to outweigh the negative experiences described.

9.5 Recommendations

Widening participation policy makers, elite universities, administrators, and academic staff would be advised to create a broad, overarching, and holistic statement defining the terms widening participation, widening access, inclusion, and diversity for all higher education institutions. For instance, efforts to identify and provide underrepresented groups access to university is not the same as ensuring that they are welcome, positively persist, and graduate from university. Thus, creating clear outcomes in their efforts to include those previously excluded would help in solidifying their desired outcome. Ironically, while I write about exclusion, I myself have benefited from the perpetuation of middle-class, white domination in higher education and the sense of entitlement that comes with earning a place. I have applied three times to higher education institutions; each time I have had a choice of where to attend. It would be nice to attribute my ability to choose to academic merit, though more accurately it probably reflected my privileged position in education.

My recommendations below are based on my findings in areas of policy, finance, and the characterisation of widening participation students at elite universities.

Recommendations for policy at the jurisdictional level:

- Policy should consider incorporating understandings of social constructs and provide a blueprint for how larger systemic issues can be addressed at the university level.
- Universities putting forth access agreements with SFC and HEFCE/OFFA (and now with the creation of the Office for Students (OfS)) should be held accountable. Both Holyrood and Westminster would be advised to enforce these university-created access agreements—otherwise there is little point to having elite universities create access agreements. Although these universities take issue with the governments' development of widening participation indicators like NS-SEC, POLAR, SIMD, their issue stems from the fact that the indicators usually do not put their efforts in a positive light.
- The US Department of Education would be advised to become more active in engaging with higher education and encouraging elite state universities to accept more students from underrepresented backgrounds. Ultimately, we should consider shifting the debate away from Affirmative Action and show how individuals are systematically excluded.
- With the decline, if not disappearance, of bursaries and grants, the US, English, and Scottish governments are putting continually more of the burden of long-term debt on the most vulnerable, low-income students. Agencies like the Department of Education, HEFCE, OFFA, OfS, and SFC would be advised to extend their financial support (and agreements) beyond raising aspirations to include addressing the experience of underrepresented students.

Recommendations for widening participation initiatives at the institutional level:

- One of the most significant recommendations reflects a key finding. The two UK universities examined above would be advised to engage in conversations about whether the fear of stigmatisation in identifying widening participation students outweighs the potential benefits in acknowledging and creating a community for those students. Currently, very little financial support is allocated to address the student experience, though much is devoted to raising aspirations. Great Lakes would be advised to make more of an effort to remove the stigma of Affirmative Action by expressing the academic achievements of all students regardless of their entry pathway.
- It would be advised that each university should begin to acknowledge and address the *habitus* of their institution. To do so, universities would be advised to challenge dominant narratives of history and honestly engage in understanding their own cultural practices in order to understand how these practices may or may not be exclusionary.
 - South Hadrian specifically needs to reflect on how institutional customs (such as their choirs singing in Latin, and university offices and clubs hosting champagne and cheese receptions with formal dress) perpetuate the *habitus*.
 - More specifically, universities should reflect on whether providing bursaries to students from poor socioeconomic backgrounds could have positive effects on their participation in co-curricular activities.
 - Universities should consider holding more student- or university-sponsored activities during the day, so 'day' or '9 to 5' students can attend.
 - The universities really need to address the cost of university-controlled events and food/cafeteria costs, and continue to add more e-books to library collections so students are not forced to purchase texts unnecessarily.
 - Much more research is necessary to address the effect of university *habitus* and how institutions can address it.

In the end, the most crucial (and perhaps philosophical) questions to be addressed by each jurisdiction are as follows. Are we truly prepared to bring equity to a system perpetuating educational disadvantage and excluding individuals based on their lack of social, cultural, or economic capital, their race, neighbourhood, schools, and test scores? Are we prepared to reject qualified white, middle-class students to ensure those from low-income backgrounds or racial/ethnic minorities can have a place? Is that what we mean by 'widening participation', 'widening access', 'diversity', and 'inclusion'? Until the US and UK can answer these questions, widening participation will most likely continue to be a half-hearted attempt at inclusion, and a work unfinished.

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Appendix 1: Leaflets and advertising



1.1 Example of UK advertisement for gatekeepers and university staff

Widening Participation and the Underrepresented Student Experience at Elite Higher Education Institutions: an international comparative study

As university rank continues to drive student choice and perception of value, universities in the US and UK strive for increasingly higher levels of excellence, status, and funding to raise and maintain their global position. Although underrepresented student applications to higher education have increased dramatically in the last twenty years, the massification of higher education has resulted in a paradox. While developed societies created new institutions (community colleges, Post-1992, Open Universities, for-profit, and online institutions) to allow space for new applicants, a hierarchy has been inadvertently created regarding student enrolment between established (elite) and newer (less prestigious) institutions.

This comparative case study will explore the underrepresented student experience at three world-class public universities in different jurisdictions (US, England, and Scotland).

Research Questions:

What is the underrepresented student experience while attending an elite research institution in one of three developed countries?

- *How does a student leverage and use different types of capital (economic, social, cultural) to aid them in negotiating peer interactions and the wider university? And what role does intuitional habitus play in this experience?*
- *How do underrepresented students cope with financing their higher education experience?*

Criteria for Participants:

Required:

- Traditional university age: 18-25 years
- First in immediate family to attend a higher education institution
- Low Income as defined by the UK as NS-SEC 4-7

What is Expected:

- A semi-structured interview of approximately 45 minutes discussing personal and family background, educational background and experiences, overall understanding of higher education.
- All participants and the institutions participating in this study will remain confidential.

Dates of the Study:

- Begin February and March of 2014
- Any follow-up will be conducted October/November of 2014

For further details contact:

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1.2 Example of student advertising at Great Lakes University



Do you want to discuss your experiences on campus and be part of an international study?

This comparative case study will explore the underrepresented student experience at three world-class public universities in different countries (US, England, and Scotland).

Criteria for Participants:

Required:

- Traditional University Age: 18-25 years
- First in immediate family to attend a four-year higher education institution
- Low Income (Pell Recipient, Work/Study Recipient) by the State

Also a Consideration:

Underrepresented as defined by the State

- Identified as part of the following communities: Chicano/ @, Latino/ @, African American, Southeast Asian, American Indian

What is Expected:

- A semi-structured interview of approximately 45 minutes discussing personal and family background, educational background and experiences, overall understanding of higher education.
- All participants and the institutions participating in this study will remain confidential.

Dates of the Study:

- Begin late March/April of 2014
- Any follow-up will be conducted August/September of 2014

For further details contact:

Katherine Friend

Tel. US +01 (1)*08 338 1508

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Appendix 2: Student information and consent forms

2.1 Student information sheet consent form

UNIVERSITY OF GREAT LAKES

Research Participant Information and Consent Form for Information Sheet

Title of the Study: Widening Participation and the Underrepresented Student Experience at Elite Higher Education Institutions: an international comparative study

Principal Investigator: Name, Phone, Email.

Student Researcher: Katherine Friend (phone: *08 338 1508) (email: K.L.Friend@sms.ed.ac.uk)

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

You are invited to participate in a research study about the underrepresented student experience at elite universities.

You have been asked to participate because the researcher is trying to determine whether you meet the following criteria: Traditional University Age: 18-25 years; First in immediate family to attend a four-year higher education institution; A Pell (federal), Work/Study Recipient (State) or receive financial support to attend university; Completed one year of Undergraduate degree This informational sheet will determine whether you fit the criteria needed to complete an interview.

The purpose of the research is to examine the experience of underrepresented students at three international research institutions.

This study will include Traditional University Age: 18-25 years; First in immediate family to attend a four-year higher education institution; A Pell (federal), Work/Study Recipient (State) or receive financial support to attend university; Completed one year of Undergraduate degree.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate in this research you will first be asked to complete an information sheet. This sheet is the first step in becoming a research participant. By agreeing to complete the information sheet the researcher (Katherine Friend) will determine whether the answers provided fit with the overall research criteria. If so, then the next step will be a one-on-one interview

You will be asked to complete 1 information sheet.

Your participation in the information sheet will require approximately 15 min

and will require 1 session. If you are selected and agree to take part in the interview portion of the study, the interview will take 45 minutes. Total, the entire study will require 1 hr in total.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO ME?

We don't anticipate any risks to you from participation in this study.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME?

We don't expect any direct benefits to you from participation in this study.

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

While there will probably be publications as a result of this study, your name will not be used. Only group characteristics will be published.

If you participate in this study, we would like to be able to quote you directly without using your name. If you agree to allow us to quote you in publications, please initial the statement at the bottom of this form.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

You may ask any questions about the research at any time. If you have questions about the research after you leave today you should contact the Principal Investigator Professor at Great Lakes University.

If you are not satisfied with response of research team, have more questions, or want to talk with someone about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the Education and Social/Behavioral Science IRB Office at *08-263-2320.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate or to withdraw from the study it will have no effect on any services or treatment you are currently receiving.

Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research and voluntarily consent to participate. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Name of Participant (please print):_____

Signature

Date

I give my permission to be quoted directly in publications without using my name.

2.2 Student interview consent form

Great Lakes University

Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Title of the Study: Widening Participation and the Underrepresented Student Experience at Elite Higher Education Institutions: an international comparative study

Principal Investigator: Name, Phone, Email

Student Researcher: Katherine Friend (phone: *08 338 1508; email: K.L.Friend@sms.ed.ac.uk)

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

You are invited to participate in a research study about the underrepresented student experience at elite universities.

You have been asked to participate because you meet the following criteria: Traditional University Age: 18-25 years; First in immediate family to attend a four-year higher education institution; A Pell (federal), Work/Study Recipient (State) or receive financial support to attend university; Completed one year of Undergraduate degree

The purpose of the research is to examine the experience of underrepresented students at three international research institutions.

This study will include Traditional University Age: 18-25 years; First in immediate family to attend a four-year higher education institution; A Pell (federal), Work/Study Recipient (State) or receive financial support to attend university; Completed one year of Undergraduate degree

Research will be conducted on the GL campus in [] Hall.

Audio tapes will be made of your participation. Only Katherine Friend (the researcher) will hear the audio recordings. All recordings will be transcribed using pseudonyms in place of names. The tapes will be kept until the PhD project is complete, which will be no later than September 2016 before they are destroyed.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate in this research you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview. This interview will last about 45 minutes and will cover questions about your family, educational experience, and finances.

You will be asked to complete 1 interview.

Your participation will last approximately 45 minutes per session and will require 1 session which will require 45 minutes in total.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO ME?

We don't anticipate any risks to you from participation in this study.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME?

We don't expect any direct benefits to you from participation in this study.

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

While there will probably be publications as a result of this study, your name will not be used. Only group characteristics will be published.

If you participate in this study, we would like to be able to quote you directly without using your name. If you agree to allow us to quote you in publications, please initial the statement at the bottom of this form.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

You may ask any questions about the research at any time. If you have questions about the research after you leave today you should contact the Principal Investigator at (*08) 262-8866. You may also call the student researcher, Katherine Friend at (*08) 338 1508.

If you are not satisfied with response of research team, have more questions, or want to talk with someone about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the Education and Social/Behavioral Science IRB Office at *08-263-2320.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate or to withdraw from the study it will have no effect on any services or treatment you are currently receiving.

Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research and voluntarily consent to participate. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Name of Participant (please print):_____

Signature

Date

_____ I give my permission to be quoted directly in publications
without using my name.

2.3 Consent form for South Hadrian and Antonine University



University of Edinburgh:

Widening Participation and the Underrepresented Student Experience at Elite Higher Education Institutions: an international comparative study

This confirms my willingness to participate as an interviewee in this project (titled above) and that the details of this project have been explained to me. I understand that all of the data will be confidential and that participant names will be known only to the researcher (Katherine Friend). I also accept that selected quotes from interviewees may be used in the final write-up of the project and possibly for further publication and dissemination in academic journals. All tapes and transcribed interviews will be destroyed once the project has been completed.

I, _____ accept these terms.
Print name

Signature

Date

Appendix 3: Example of information form for student participants

STUDENT PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM

What is your age? _____

Do you have siblings? (Y/N)_____

How many? _____

Who raised you? _____

(Mother, Father, Parental Guardians, Siblings, other)

Where were you born? _____

What ethnicity best describes you?_____

What is your permanent Post Code/Zip Code?_____

What is your subject of study while attending university? _____

Are you enrolled as a full time student? (Y/N) _____

Have any of your family members attended university?(Y/N) _____

If so, who has attended? _____

How many of your friends or acquaintances from your home community are attending university?
(circle/bold)

All

Many

Some

Few

None

Are you still in contact with those friends/acquaintances? (Y/N)_____

Those who are enrolled in Higher Education, where are they attending?

Who influenced your decision on where to go to university? (*circle/bold*)

Parents

Family

Friends

Teachers

Guidance Counsellor

Self

Other:_____

Did you take any time away from school before beginning university? (Y/N)_____

Did you feel prepared to attend university? (briefly explain why/why not?)

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

Where are you living while attending university? (*circle/bold*)

At Home University Dorms Private Dorms Private Apartment Other:____

How are you financing your university fees/university tuition? (*circle/bold*)

Scholarship Loans Free-Tuition Parents/Family
PELL/ Other Gov't Grant Employment/Job Borrowing from bank/non-bank
Other: _____

How are you financing your living expenses while attending university? (*circle/bold*)

Scholarship Loans Free-Tuition Parents/Family
Employment/Job Borrowing from bank non-bank
Other:_____

Do you receive any money from your parents/guardians while at University? (Y/N)____
If yes, how much on average per month do they contribute?_____

Are you expecting to take on financial debt because of attending University? (Y/N)____

If yes, how much debt (average) are you expecting to leave University with? (£/\$)_____

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being not worried, 5 being extremely worried), how worried are you about taking on debt for education? (*circle/bold*)

1 2 3 4 5

Are you employed during term (during the semester)? (Y/N)_____

Have you interned or volunteered while attending university? (Y/N)_____
If so, is this expected or the norm within your course of study? (Y/N) _____

Are you involved in any university sports, clubs, or social groups? (Y/N)_____

Have you ever felt out of place at University? (Y/N)_____
If so, in what way? _____

Are there support programs at this university? (Y/N)
If yes, please list:_____

Are you/ were you a member of an access, pipeline, student support , or mentor program that brought you to university before you actually enrolled as a student? (Y/N)_____

Have you ever sought out help (Academic, Personal, Financial) (Y/N)_____
If so, which?_____

Are you concerned with national/international university rankings? (Y/N)_____

Overall, are you happy you selected to attend this institution? (Y/N)_____

Appendix 4: Examples of interview schedules

4.1 Example of interview schedule for Antonine University students

Preamble

Introduce Self: My name is Katherine Friend, I am a second year PhD student at the University of Edinburgh. I am researching the widening participation and the student experience at elite universities

Consent: I am handing you a consent form for you to read. This interview will last about 45 minutes and will cover questions about your family, educational experience, and finances. If at any time you do not want to answer a question it is in your right to skip the question or opt out of the research all together. I will give you a moment to read the consent form and if you have any questions please let me know.

Interview Question & Explanation: This interview will be recorded and transcribed, however, your name or the institutions name will not be used in the project. As indicated above, I will ask you a series of questions, some of which will be very personal. I am asking because the information those questions provide is really important for understanding this topic – however if you'd rather not answer some of them that's fine. Just to ensure I understand your responses, I might repeat questions, or ask for what seems to be the same information, but in a different way. If you do not know some of the answers or want to come back to a question, that is fine, we can revisit questions at the end of the interview. Do you have any questions at this time?

Background

Can you tell me a bit about yourself particularly your childhood and family make-up.

Can you describe your education, where you attended elementary, secondary school?

Did you attend the local school in your area?; Overall, did you enjoy school? When you were young, what were your thoughts about university?

Familial Resources

What do you feel your parents' attitudes are toward higher education?

Follow-up to information sheet: I see that your parents/teachers/family/etc. influenced your decisions, can you tell me in what ways they influenced you or what effect they had on your decision.

How well cohesive is your family life and University life? Are they connected in any way or are they relatively separate?

Do you feel that your past (or childhood) friendships have remained close as you've entered HE (and different institutions); do you feel that your past friendships are connected to your current university life?

University Finance

While university fees are free, you still must pay for living expenses

Are you receiving a loan to pay for living costs? Do you know how much you are receiving?

Have you applied for loans or receiving any bursaries through SAAS (Student Awards Agency for Scotland) or any other grant to help off-set your living fees?

What are your thoughts about the idea that while Scottish tuition is free for Scottish students, but you must take out loans for living costs?

Did you think about attending University where you would pay university fees?

Do you have anxieties about taking out loans and is there a limit in which you will take out?

What impact do you think this will have on your employment choices after university?

What effect do these loans have on your university experience?

Financially, how would you compare yourself to others attending the same university?

Fitting In & Campus

Thinking back to when you first arrived on campus, can you remember what that felt like?

Describe your overall feelings toward this university.

Do you think there is a 'typical student' at this university? If so, can you describe them in terms of backgrounds, behaviour, social life, academics?

Based on your description, where do you see yourself in relation to that 'typical student'?

How do you believe other people (peers, faculty, administration) perceive you at university?

Relating to an Elite Institution

Do you feel that there are identifiable groups on campus? Can you speak a bit about them?

Do you feel part of the larger university community (or a specific community)?

Can you describe what types of things you do in your free time when not in class?

If you did intern or volunteer, how did you secure that post?

What are other ways you feel that you are building a network in terms of friends and of future employment?

When you applied to university, did you feel you had an equal chance of being accepted?

Participation in Support Programs

Were you involved in any programs that brought you to campus before university such as academic access programs, pipelines, campus visits, etc. Such as: Pathways to Professions, Sutton Trust, Reach, ACES, [JUMPS], Moving On?

If so, do you believe they had any impact on your attending university?

What did the program consist of?

What was the reputation of this program?

How did you feel being part of this program?

Are you currently involved in any access programs with any other students such as Peer Mentoring?

If so, how did this program continue at University?

If not, have you received support from any other department on campus:

(Centre for Teaching and Learning, Advice Place, Counselling, or the Chaplaincy)

In your opinion, what is the feeling or philosophy of the wider university?

Social Class

In the UK, you hear of the 'Meritocratic Society' where as long as you work hard, you will have an equal opportunity, what does this mean to you? Do you think it exists?

Do you think University will help you to become more socially mobile (will having a degree lead to better employment prospects, more financial security)?

Gender

Do you think there are different expectations of how male and female students should behave at university?

Are there some things that are accepted for young men to do but not young women?

If so, can you explain?

Are there any pressures that exist in university that are on specifically one gender? Study? Work? Friends? Relationships? Fun?

(IF EXPRESSED ABOVE) Male students are often portrayed as having a lack of motivation, how do you respond to this?

(IF EXPRESSED ABOVE) Female students are often portrayed as more likely to meet with faculty, worry about their grades, and work harder while attending university, how do you respond to this?

Women now outnumber men amongst the overall university population, why do you think this is the case?

Do you think being male/female and being part of your ethnic community creates any more or less opportunity (school, social, employment)?

Closing

What are your plans after you graduate from university?

What are the top two skills you feel you've learned while attending university?

Are there any questions that you would like to return to?

Is there anything else that you feel you would like to add about your experience that we have not explored?

Thank you for your time.

4.2 Example of interview schedule for South Hadrian Widening Participation Officer

Preamble

Introduction, ethics policy & document signing, explanation of research

Implementation of WP/ Access

Can you tell me about how the implementation of the WP/inclusion of WP was decided?

I am familiar with some of the WP initiatives on campus, can you discuss these a bit more in-depth particularly contextual admissions policy and student support while on campus.

I've read about the benchmarks put in place, can you speak a bit more about how were the WP benchmarks arrived at? And what indicators are used?

How were these introduced to the larger university body (both staff and students)

Do you feel staff widely understand the objectives?

What do universities have to report to OFFA (or the state) to demonstrate that their WP initiatives are doing enough?

What will happen if this university is deemed as not performing at a high-enough level as decided by OFFA (or the State), what will be the response?

Fitting in and Campus Habitus

Can you give me some insight into the overall campus climate? Social breakdown/ overall feel of the university in terms of student body.

Do you feel that this university attracts one particular type of student?

Capital

Students who come in under the WP classification, what are the avenues of financial support provided?

Can you talk a bit about the reasoning behind Edinburgh decreasing the bursaries and increasing the loans available? And how was this relayed to students?

In terms of living expenses, do you think this hinders the overall experience?

How do you perceive WP students engagement with campus life?

Relating to an Elite Institution

Can you tell me a bit about the balance between admitting WP students and remaining an elite institution in terms of statistics? What are the tensions that coincide with those two efforts?

How do you track WP students and can you talk a bit about the different kinds of support students can receive? Is there an opt in/out from these programs?
I am familiar with your outcome agreements, but can you speak a bit more about how these plans will be/ or are being put into action and the expected student outcome?

Appendix 5: Examples of student narratives

5.1 Great Lakes University—Brandon

Brandon, 22, African American, US

Background to interview

I was referred to Brandon after other student participants noticed him in the university office and told me that I should include him in this study. When I approached him, he was very open and willing to participate, so the interview was scheduled. On the day, I waited for 20 minutes, worried that he would be a no-show, but at the thirty-minute mark he ran into the office. He indicated that his work commitments had run late and that he would give me all the time I needed. While he was open, he was also very guarded, overly self-confident, and smug. All these things, it seemed, hid his true self.

Background of student

Brandon was born fourth of five children in a single-parent household in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA. He never knew his father, and indicated that his father never knew he existed because his mother never told him. Within the household, there were two generations of siblings, those now in their 40s, born to their mother who at the time was a teenager, and those in their teens and 20s born ten years afterwards. Brandon is the first person in his family to enter higher education with the hopes (and at times despair) of becoming a doctor. At the age of 15, Brandon became a nursing assistant to test his dreams of medicine. That job, one of many, served to support his family, as his mother is chronically unemployed. He indicated that at one time she was a drug and alcohol counsellor, but the jobs *'just dwindled away'*. His father figure, who is not his biological father, was at some point employed as a church pastor; however, it is unclear whether he was employed at the time of the interview. Of his older siblings, his brother works as a cleaner and the other for the IRS. His sister is a nursing assistant.

Educationally, Brandon found himself in the Special Education classes in Milwaukee Public Schools because, in his words, he *'didn't walk or talk until I was 7 years old and was in special ed. until I was maybe 8'*. Once in middle school at the age of 12 he was chosen for the Gifted and Talented programme which served as a pipeline to what he considered to be a good high school, with the possibility of continuing to university. Regardless of the Gifted and Talented programme, Brandon ended up going to what he considered a 'run-down' high school because his applications for the 'good' schools were never submitted by his mother. Due to the standards of the high school he attended, Brandon was able to graduate in just two years. Because of his early graduation, he was able to re-enter a different high school and attend Rufus King High School as an 11th grader and thus finish out his last two years of high school at a pipeline school. When speaking of higher education he indicated that

where I come from education wasn't really pushed. It was almost like it was the enemy and it was like ... why would you want that? You are sucking up to the teacher, or, they do not know how to teach ... or ... it was always an excuse. But the real excuse I feel like was in the fact that there was no motivations in the students I went to school with... they didn't feel like they could make it at an early age, so therefore they came up with every excuse to kinda rock themselves to sleep at night to feel better about the fact that that they may not be going anywhere in life.

Since education was not encouraged, Brandon was unsure of how to go about laying the foundation for and applying to higher education. Brandon realised that he was not an average student and was ranked the number one and youngest CNA (nursing assistant) in the state. Regarding that recognition,

even students began to look at you differently because then you become that smart kid and... it kind of was the community that made me realize that I could go somewhere and I had not really reached that point until all my sources were like you are going to college.

Brandon credits his being an inquisitive person with his application and acceptance into higher education.

I wanted to be a doctor [and I would] ask questions of how do you get there ... and people were like you have to [got to] college and then they really couldn't give me answers at the time, but I kept asking, and then I was in the HS pre-college program and then talking to professors at college, you must go here to get to where you want to go, so I think it was just my goal and then ... by asking about it ... and eventually being told this is what you need to do to get here.

Family resources

When asked about his family's thoughts on higher education, he responded to both his wider community as well as his family. In regards to his community,

I have a lot of pastors and like religious people, so at first I went into a spot like ... no you are not going to go 'cause that's like... 'it's against god in some ways' ... they are like 'college is the devil' ... it's where my parents wanted me to come and be a pastor and pursue some religious course and eventually lead god's people and maybe do a trinity college, somewhere home, so I could still do my work of god.

And yet it seemed that his family was conflicted between serving god and the ability of their son to support the family. Brandon mentioned that,

I think what more makes them happy is the fact that the amount of money I could possibly make and be able to support my family because no one has really gone and done this yet.

Money seems to be placing a lot of pressure on his shoulders. His university academic advisors, he says, are upset with him due to the fact that he puts work above his own education. There is not a balance of school and work, but rather a general flow of the two until something '*blows up*', but there is no time to remedy a situation, he has to press on. Brandon also commented on whether his family life and educational life were cohesive. He indicated that,

I always like to tell my friends and family and my girlfriend that I feel like, I feel like a chameleon because no matter where I go I am always changing the color of who I am ... like here ... I am like' oohh like this, this and this' [he is pointing at his clothes—dressed in a button up shirt, bow tie], sounding more educated and proper, and going home and being told like...

'you're bougie'¹, 'you think you are better than us', when originally you guys pushed me because you wanted to that ... a success story... but then when you come back it's like 'ohh you think you're better than us' 'ohh you don't want to do this' ... so then it's like... okay ... (pause) my vocabulary has to change ... my views have to change on certain things ... especially ... 'cause I am around ... a lot of struggling families who are democratic in a way, and then to come here [university] and there are a lot of republicans and talk to them, and being told like okay the way that this program works ... or the way food stamps work ... or the way this assistance works could be fixed, but ... while back home ... being told that could possibly get me beat up ... 'cause it's like you know ... 'you came from this don't act like you are better than it'.

Brandon arrived to the interview in a button up shirt, bow tie, nice trousers, and glasses. He was keen to show off his socks that matched his tie. But when asked whether that is how he dressed all the time, he was quick to point out that that is how he dressed while at university. At home his dress would consist of

hoodies, jeans, and like, Jordans, and you know like tennis shoes, like less dressy because there is no need ... like not even to impress, but it's just like, I won't fit in.

He revisited this topic later in the interview.

University finance

In order to attend Great Lakes University, Brandon secured the finances to cover tuition and living costs. Brandon is a recipient of the following: the Pell Grant, the Lawton Retention Grant (provided by the university itself), religious scholarships, high school scholarships, the [Great Lakes] Grant, and a G-Health care scholarship that will cover the tuition for medical school. The scholarships and grants are enough to cover both tuition and living expenses, but Brandon still holds down two jobs. Regardless of all the grants and scholarships, Brandon indicated that he is employed in order to support his family. He commented,

¹ Bougie according to the Urban Dictionary refers to: 'aspiring to a higher class than one is.' (online at <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=bougie>)

its basically like me paying for them to live ... the job is not really for me. It's for everyone else, so that is why my [academic] advisors are kinda like you need to cut them off from funding, but if I honestly cut them off, I could be a 4.0 student. I spend a lot of time at work. Yesterday, I was there from 9am to 11pm.

Brandon's parents are receiving US public assistance in the form of food stamps. Other than food, Brandon takes care of every other need in his parent's life. When Brandon was asked what drove him to work continually while in university, he replied

my family is tugging at my feet and medical school is tugging at my hands and its like ... do you brush off your dreams ... or kick the people that are below you even farther down ... And then it's just like what happens if I don't make it and I cannot support you guys anymore ... 'cause ... then we're all doomed. And I've just wasted a whole four years [of] tuition at a like a world-renowned university ... for what? So ... (laughter) so it's just kinda like I am looking for that balance, but I haven't found it yet.

While Brandon laughs about these issues it seems the laughter keeps him from feeling the enormity placed on his shoulders. When filling out the questionnaire prior to the interview, Brandon indicated debt he has incurred as a result of university. He specified that he enrolled in summer school and the debt was a result of not working as much and opening a credit card to pay for both the tuition, living expenses, and family. Currently the debt incurred is hovering around \$3,000, but his maximum debt level is \$5,000, and he has a relatively low debt-anxiety of two out of five. The conversation regarding debt and finances turned to comparing Brandon's situation to that of his peers at university. His response was

but as far as students ... of color, I feel like we were given a small break, 'I'll let you in into this university, but you need to take into account that we are the cream of the crop of our communities', so then When you take us away, those communities only get worse because we were ... the best apples. And then the tree begins to die because it has no good apples. And then you bring us here where it's like, there are a lot of good people here, but then it's not fair because we still have dents on ourselves, financial and family stuff back home, and we still have to work cause there is a lot of work study, like I have work study as well to support myself, but I just feel

like it is not fair because I cannot just get up and just be a student. When I get up I am more than a student, I am a parent, I am someone's support ... I am someone's 6am phone call when they are sick, I am someone's pastor in a sense, like I am more than a student and it's like the burdens that I bare. You walk into campus and you are rated just like everyone else, but it's just like ... that is not fair.

When asked for clarification regarding 'someone's first call', Brandon mentioned that his younger sister was a first year student at the same university and he was looking after her.

Brandon feels that, while he is the cream of his community academically once at university no one understands the outside pressure students like Brandon face. As a result, a further inequality is created because he is treated equally, but not with equity.

Fitting in & campus life

As mentioned above, much of Brandon speaking about finances also included information regarding his overall experience at university and fitting in.

Brandon re-visited his first several days on campus as a first year. He reported that he had just undergone foot surgery and was limping around campus. It was on this topic that he addressed receiving his scholarship check for the first time.

I had been here maybe 3 days and I didn't have money like \$5.00. Then you get this scholarship check and it's like damn, I'm rich! So this experience has been like ... it just looked like ... like everything is going to be okay. I am not going to die in college. I do not have to be on a Ramen noodle diet and it's really weird 'cause ... you know you are super poor and you do not know what to do with your life, 'how do I do this?' And then are given this ... it's like you won the lottery, but you still don't know what to do with all of this money, so then you waste it because no one taught you financial planning ... you don't have a parent to tell you to put it in savings.

Brandon's engagement with loans checks and financial management seemed to be of large importance to him. Again he felt that the university missed the enormity of receiving a large sum of money placed in your bank account when

you have come from poverty. The university fails to realise that that sum is the largest sum such student most likely have ever seen.

When asked whether he feels like the typical student, Brandon indicated that he does not, because a typical student at the university was someone who came from a good high school, had good parents (meaning that they are middle class), and came into university with advance placement or international baccalaureate credit. He continued his perception of the typical student by denoting that he does not have a similar family experience, either:

'ohh yea my brother or sister or my mom knows so and so, so that is how I got that job', or 'my older brother used to go here and he told me that to take this class with this professor cause he's really good'.

Most times he lies about who he is or feels left out. In terms of social situations,

if I get drunk and something happens, I mean I don't have health care and I get drunk and something happens to me, I don't have parents who can drive up here and check on me ... so its like ... it's like I feel alone, and I don't feel like that is the typical student ... like you should not feel alone, you should NOT feel alone, like you have nothing to depend on or fall back on.

Brandon's lack of health care was of serious concern and yet the reason for his being uninsured was very simple: finance. Brandon is a student with no safety nets regarding health, family, or money. While talking about his fellow students, Brandon recalls a story of his friends' drunk, crying over how his life is and how strong he is—to which he did not know how to respond. Brandon had thought about this interactions and commented that,

it's like basically tomorrow you are going to be sober and like eventually you will live your life and I will have to live mine and so, like, 'thanks for telling me you're proud of me in a way, but yea, nothing has stopped, for that 2 seconds that you cared, that was nice, but I am still going to be in this situation' soooooo ... it makes me feel like my life is impossible ... like what I am doing is just stupid.

It seems that Brandon does not really have friends who can (even marginally) relate to his life. So he is isolated, worried, and exhausted. Despite Brandon's worry of not making it, when asked how he copes, it is religion that he turns to. When pressed to talk about why people say his life is so difficult, there was a long pause in the conversation to combat the emotion of the topic. He revealed that when he was 15 years old, he was enrolled in a pre-college programme at a university in the north of Wisconsin. At this time, he and his family were homeless. So during the week, he was staying in the school dorms, but at the weekend it was a struggle to find a place where he and his two other siblings could sleep.

my mother kind of was like.. 'I can't'². She had three kids at the time, so I cannot really take three kids with me everywhere I go,' cause it's like one thing to like ohhh we all have a friend 'ohh yea I am in a bad situation can I sleep in your couch', but three kids following them that (laughter) naaw, naww I am not going to have three kids around my house, and you know being homeless and like finding things to do and places to go until like it was time to come back and go back to [the university] and live in the dorms, but then after that [summer] program is over so, then that is why I heavily relied on my religion.

I floated from friends houses' ... see what I am saying, I had a girlfriend of like 8 years, well 6 years at the time, so sneaking into basements and like stuff like that, and I had suitcases ... so I kinda needed to wash my clothes and stuff like that. I figured it out. I guess ... and like everyone in my family are like ministers and stuff like that and they still go in front of the congregation in front of the mass and like they put on this cloak, this face, that everything is okay, so I didn't want to be the one who ruins it and be like ... we're homeless, it's kinda like as a preacher's kid you cannot sit up there, you have to pretend everything is okay.

It was at this time of homelessness that Brandon became a CNA and started earning \$16-\$17.00 per hour. As a result, he felt as though he became the head of his household. When his father figure and mother questioned his authority at home, he mentioned that he was no longer a child; he paid their rent and their bills. It seems that it was around this time that Brandon appointed himself the

² 'I can't' refers to Brandon's mother giving up. She could not emotionally comprehend being homeless.

head of the house and breadwinner of the family—a fact that has not changed since he entered higher education. Both religion and a ‘mask’ or a ‘cloak’ appeared earlier in the interview regarding finances and dress. The question was regarding self-authenticity and whether he ever felt like himself.

I am not going through an identity crisis. When I feel like me, is when I am in church or in the religious setting ... ‘cause here [at university] I have this need to dress up and seem intelligent because you are combatting the fact that there are people here who do not want me here and then there are people pulling me to be here so now I have to put on this face, this game face, then at home it’s just like ... this I am here to help and here to do all these great things, but I don’t want to tell you that I honestly want to go to sleep on the couch and pass out ‘cause I really just took the most rigorous ... I mean I am in three science classes and a math class and you just want to go home back home and come home to [a] home cooked meal ... Everyone else goes back to home cooked meals and [they say] ... ‘ohh my room is still here from high school’ and the great stories of grandmothers and parents. No. I go back to a floor. And then like right now [at university], I live in an apartment that [has a] 50 inch TV and like food all over ... (I like to cook) and then to go back [home]... we don’t know how we are going to eat today and its like ... okay I am going to go get some thing to eat myself and its like ‘you are not gonna like feed everyone else, how dare you act like that’. And I am like ‘I do not have enough money to buy everyone something to eat’. It’s just hard (the floor to sleep on). So it’s like going from like rags to riches ... that’s generally how I feel.

Relating to an elite institution

When questions regarding university groups and the larger community arose, Brandon responded that he did not feel part of the larger community, but did connect with his fraternity. Unfortunately, his connection with his fraternity had suffered due to his falling below the minimum grade point average, which resulted in him being stripped of his title of President. He disclosed that he felt like he had put himself on the ‘back burner’ for everyone else and had dropped the ball in terms of his university grades. Despite Brandon’s fraternity connections being affected by work, he felt that he was able to build networks for the future as he was employed at the University Medical School. He did not feel as positive about his friend networks. He indicated that he felt very alone.

I mean people do not perceive me as that, I mean I am the fraternity guy, I am Mr. Social. I seem like an extrovert, when at the end of the day, when you really look for me and late [at] night and you are really trying to find me, people are he's probably with his fraternity, he is probably with his girlfriend ... but obviously I am somewhere in the corner to myself trying to figure out my life and trying to re-work my schedule and rewriting my schedule or re-writing my future plans and trying to juggle everything and everyone else thinks I am somewhere partying or doing something else.

Participation in support programmes

Brandon is a participant of a university support programme housed in the College of Arts and Science within the larger University. This support programme required participation in a seven week summer school bridge programme to prepare the students for university curriculum and familiarises them with a university campus. The support programme is a four-year initiative aimed at holistically supporting each student's needs with their own advisor, and other curricular support initiatives such as private academic tutors. It was unclear how much support Brandon sought while a member of this support programme.

Social class

Brandon had very specific ideas in relation to the existence of the American Dream and explained so with racial undertones. He discussed the idea that, rather than being physical slaves, Americans are now mental slaves. This is caused by those working at a general management level and thinking that one has more power, however, in reality, those in high-powered positions hold all the cards. Brandon discussed how American people occupying low-income jobs are often placed on food stamps or governmental assistance to raise their median income above the poverty line. But, in fact, this serves to keep their earnings low and the individuals in the cycle of poverty.

I feel like the American dream ... just doesn't exist. 'I'll give you food stamps. I'll give you assistance. I'll give you all this stuff, but you have to stay down here and your income has to be this low and as soon as you pass a certain line, we'll make sure you get back there cause we'll cut off your assistance'. So now you have to use them to pay for food, which throws you back down.

It seems the American Dream is also linked to race and limited to those from poor socioeconomic groups. He also indicated the struggle between furthering one's education and social mobility.

I work as a nursing assistant right now, my income is above a lot of people, who are even older than me, but the only thing I feel is once I get up there then it will be: 'where is my sense of community and sense of family?' I'll be one of those [Great Lakes] educated and then you look down and it's like, 'what was the point or now I have this nice home and now everyone is judging in some type of way as soon as they need something'. Again that slavery concept is created. I mean we don't have a slave master, so we need something we know he's the one to bring the food, but instead of it being a white man, it's a black man.

The image Brandon creates is that university allows him to rise both economically and socially. It is clear he feels an intense pressure to make money but remain where he is—which is just not possible. He feels that by having a higher education degree, earning money, and supporting his community, he will turn into a 'slave master' whereby his community is dependant on him to survive. As Brandon was asked a question pertaining to rising within the American social classes, he responded that with rising came punishment from his community.

you know how everyone has a group of best friends since high school or college, and I don't really have that. I can relate to small parts of people, but vaguely 2% of who they are, 2% of who I am. I know a lot of people feel like 'oohh I am from the inner city' or 'I am from here' and then you come back and you talk like you are white. 'Why do you sound like that?' 'Why do you pronounce it [like that]?' 'That is not how you say that word ...' and then they misuse a word and you're ... (laughing) that is not correct. So, it is just like they are comfortable with where they are at that moment and you test that. You make them [uncomfortable]. You make it hard for them.

Summary of overarching themes from interview

- Brandon is from a poor, working-class background in a single-parent household. While Brandon made it into HE, it is clear that the drive was personal due to his story regarding his mother and missed education

applications. There has been backlash within his family and community for turning his back on them.

- Brandon disclosed that he was homeless as a teenager and became (and remains) the main source of financial income for his entire family.
- While Brandon does not need to worry about tuition or living expenses, he is still employed at two separate jobs. This not only serves to support his family, but also serves to alienate him from university life and making connections with people. The financial pressure that he is under clearly affects his university experience and while advisors are encouraging him to stop working to improve his academics, it is clear that is simply not possible.
- Brandon expressed being lonely multiple times throughout the interview. It seems that, while his peers try and connect with him, he finds them to be fake or feels worse about his situation.
- He also expressed the idea of being a 'chameleon' or wearing a 'mask' or a 'cloak' in relation to finance and identity.
- Brandon is aware of the balance of a university degree and hopes of medical school with his family and community needs. He discussed removing himself from his community in order to attend HE and whether to go back into his community once he is employed.
- Brandon was placed in special education until the age of 8. He then was pushed into the Gifted and Talented programme in middle school. This allowed him access to different courses and encouraged him to attend a well-respected high school. When that did not happen, Brandon graduated from his first high school early to re-enrol in a second high school, which featured a school to university pipeline programme. It was through his own effort and perseverance, and nothing else, that Brandon is enrolled in HE today.

5.2 South Hadrian University—Chloe

Chloe, 22, White British, England

Background

Chloe is a 22-year-old first-generation university student from Leeds. Her parents separated when she was a young child. She lived with her mother until the age of 16, but moved in with her father due to her mother's battle with alcohol dependency and depression. Chloe's father is a self-employed web developer (although she could not describe exactly what his job entailed). Due to her mother's personal struggles, her mother is unemployed and lives on assistance.

Chloe attended the local village school for both primary and high school. She is aware that, while her school was not bad, her understanding of it has changed since attending an elite HE institution. There seemed to be more opportunities at other schools than what was provided for her.

The difference is a lot of people I've met here it was assumed they would go on to their A-levels but my school a lot of people didn't. So, to apply to go to college was a big step whereas, people I've met here it was just assumed you would do that.

There were three different colleges Chloe could have attended: one vocational, one that was the best academically and the third which enrolled students with lower GCSEs. Chloe chose the latter due to the fact that her friends attended that college. Upon reflection, she was unsure why she did not attend the college which would have better prepared her for university. Chloe recounts a story of her interview for entrance into Oxford University.

I had an Oxford interview and my college was a bit, they didn't really know what to do with me. I didn't have a practice interview. I didn't have a lot of support. And I showed up at the interview. And I don't know why I thought I had a chance of getting in because everyone else there seemed to be so prepared and dressed a lot better than me. I don't know ... I thought that I

would be fine until I got there I guess 'cause I didn't know what to expect. I don't regret the college I went to, I just feel like they would have pushed me harder if I had gone to the other one.

She applied twice to university with a year in between each effort. The first time she applied she had selected four institutions but due to her 4As her college tutor suggested she apply to Oxford. This was something she never considered and in fact placed it last on her list.

'I travelled back [to Oxford] with my dad and I was quite taken aback by it. And we got shown the college and just the people I met there, it was intimidating, but it was so different from anything I experienced at school, especially when we were being talked about all the different extracurricular sort of things that happen. I guess it happens at every other university, but I quite liked the college system. So, I ended up changing my mind on what I wanted to do for my degree any way, so I took a year out and applied again. And [my currently university] stood out []. I didn't even realise it was a good university when I applied which is ridiculous now looking back. It was just I had five choices and I liked this one.

Being first generation, she found both the idea of higher education and the culture intimidating. It is clear that she knew very little about university and rankings.

Prior to attending university, Chloe described her year out. When she was 16 years old, she struggled to find a part-time job, so she volunteered at Leeds University. From her experience, she was introduced to the idea of overseas volunteering. During her year out, she taught English in Kenya and found that experience helpful in preparing for university.

Family resources

It seemed that Chloe's father was very supportive of her education. She commented that he wished he could have attended higher education because he was clever and motivated. Since comparatively few went into higher education when her father was of age, he instead joined the police force. When he visited her at higher education, she recalled his always being impressed even though, she felt he did not seem to grasp the details of it.

Below, Chloe describes the differences in both her accent and her word choice after enrolling in university. Upon reflection, her friends and family back home are completely different to those she now socialises with at university. Her parents now mock her 'new accent' and mannerisms. Chloe also admitted that she had only managed to stay close with those friends from home who are also attending higher education institutions.

University finance

Due to her financial need, Chloe is receiving the maximum of the tuition fee loan. Having begun university prior to the tuition hike, Chloe is only responsible for £3,000 per year which is a clear relief. On top of the loans, Chloe is a recipient of the university's grant scheme, which, when combined with her maintenance loan is around £2,000 per term. She was unable to provide a breakdown of how her loan and grant were split. The £2,000 per term pays the cost of living in university housing (room/board/food). Because she could not break down from what source her money was coming, she was asked about her debt anxiety. The debt, without a doubt, does not bother her. This is the case because she knows she will not be responsible for repayment until she is gainfully employed. While Chloe realised that perhaps she should have a better grasp on the terms of the loan because she never actually sees the money, she does not need to deal with debt reality. Even with her maintenance, where part of her living is a loan and the other is a grant, both are seen as one amount. It is only the paperwork that provides documentation that she in fact is accepting loans.

On one hand, Chloe seems rather distant from her loans, but on the other, she did have anxiety in her first year due to unemployment and taking out a student overdraft of £500.00.

In between terms and on weekends, Chloe works at Subway sandwiches. While she claims '*it is not the best job out there*', it allows her the flexibility to pick up shifts when she needs them. In summer 2013, Chloe was awarded a paid

internship in Leeds. The proximity to home allowed her to take the internship. Unpaid internships are simply not an option. This is contrary to many stories she had heard from her peers

I don't get anything off my parents, and I don't even ask them for anything. Whereas I know some of my friends will get paid every so often by their parents, for maintenance I guess. It's quite different, my boyfriend went here and his parents paid for his tuition and everything and I just think that's crazy.

Fitting In & campus life

It seems Chloe found university very different to the culture she was normally around. During the first week on campus, Chloe met her now best friend; she described their first meeting:

... he was the first person I met. And he went to St. Pauls ... or some private school and I didn't even know what he was saying to me when he sat down next to me. I just thought he was a bit crazy and he was so open and he just sat next to me and started asking me all these questions. And I was a bit taken aback. The people were quite different, they were really confident and just really different.

There were a lot of firsts she experienced. Since the university accommodation is highly sought after, much of the social aspect of university surrounds the university residences. Each house hosts a weekly formal. The traditions of formal and the Latin spoken before each meal were completely foreign. She also admitted that she had never drunk wine before the college formals. When Chloe's friends from home visited her at university, they claimed that it like a 'Harry Potter' movie. Because of everything being new, Chloe signed up for 'loads of extracurricular' activities, many she had never actually taken part in, but it was the signing-up that excited her.

She is eager to describe the typical student at university. The automatic response was 'Southern'. Chloe laughed as she described the students indicating how ridiculous she found her new surroundings.

... they wear certain things, the guys wear ridiculous trousers, like pink trousers or like Barbour jackets and flat caps. You would see someone and you'd know they were a [University] student. And the way they acted as well. A typical sort of night out might be cheese and wine.

First arriving on campus, Chloe found everything to be posh. As she settled in, she still does not feel like a typical student, but her dress, her accent, and how she presents herself have all changed. Her childhood friends believe she has changed and are quick to point out the differences. Chloe admits that the changes might have resulted in wanting to fit into her new surroundings. It seems that she never felt like herself before attending university.

Before university with my friends I'd never say that I read this book or I've done this. I don't know, I think I'd probably be laughed at. Whereas here I feel like I can maybe be more accepted doing those kinds of things and being more academic.

Relating to an elite institution

Being a northerner and attending a northern university was much different than Chloe anticipated. As described above, southern accents, southern ideals, and southern money dominated the northern institution. As a result, those from the north are exposed to extreme wealth and socioeconomic privilege. She quickly found friends, many also from the North, but she describes not feeling understood (both in terms of accent and socially) at first.

I think my accent has changed a lot now. So now when I go home [they] laugh at my accent it's southern now. But you definitely can tell a difference and as soon as you meet someone they say, 'ohh where are you from', where I wouldn't say that to anybody else because everyone has the same accent here.

It's strange I don't feel like I am actively trying to change the way I speak, but maybe it's just things I've picked up from being here and I definitely think about the way I say things, and I think before I say them to people here. I don't know why I guess, I think they won't understand me or there are just certain ways of saying things. Like at home I'd say breakfast, dinner and tea and here its breakfast, lunch, and, dinner. And when I go home it's very confusing for my parents.

Differences in accent seem to be a clear shift in mind-set between home life and university life.

Differences also exist between identifiable groups on campus. The division between the residences on the 'hill' and the [street] symbolise the division between social classes. The [street] is considered to be the more traditional set of residences at the university. Posher students who come from more academically advantaged backgrounds represent the tradition of the [street] residence. Another striking difference to Chloe was the general confidence of the student body. Chloe remembers walking around during the first round of 'hursts' (students running for positions within their residence)

I walked around I was really, really surprised at how well people put themselves across and how speaking so publically and I would have never of even run for anything even if I wanted to. Even now, I probably wouldn't. And it's not that I think I couldn't take the role ... I just think I couldn't put myself to do it. I've just never been really good at speaking publically. I guess it's because different schools and different societies and drama and stuff give people the opportunity to do that and to communicate better.

Chloe found the cultural differences the most staggering. Hearing of the places her fellow students had been, the things they had experienced on family trips and during holidays; authors they referenced and classical music all made her feel embarrassed as she did not know what they were referencing. This continued on social occasions.

I went to cut cheese and apparently there's a way to cut cheese which I didn't know about. And someone was in shock the way I cut the cheese ... and all sorts of silly rules like when you have bread with soup you're not allowed to cut it you have to rip it.

Now, Chloe is able to laugh about the cultural differences, but even as she spoke about them she still felt removed from the social aspect of university. She was quick to reference all the mistakes she had made, all the things that she did not know, and yet did not speak about how her being different positively affected the university.

Participation in support programmes

Chloe was a member of the University of Leeds Reach for Excellence Programme. While in College, she was part of a high achieving peer group. Her college tutor (also the principal) encouraged her to apply for Reach for Excellence. The programme assisted her with completing both a CV and university applications. Overall, Chloe found Reach for Excellence worthwhile and it allowed her to live on a university campus for one week.

She indicated that the criteria by which she was selected was as a result of receiving an EMA in college and being a first generation student.

Social class

Chloe reported that with hard work anyone can achieve good grades. On the other hand, she is quick to mention that there are

certain circumstances that just make it really difficult for people. Things like ... what's going to happen in the future when you're choosing which A-levels to do or when you are revising. You're not thinking about that [in the school I went to]. And it's quite hard. I think it does help ... if you go to a better school or have certain opportunities. 'Cause I think even if you work really hard and you have fantastic grades in a state school, that compared to the same person in a private school, I feel like they'd have so much more extra experience other than the academic side. I feel like they're more confident, try different things, and have the cultural awareness. And I think that helps a lot more than people think. Like being able to network—I think that's as important sometimes as the qualifications you get.

Chloe's reference to extra experiences and ability to network correspond with her statements above; she again is quick to speak of how her personal and academic background failed to set her up in the way she feels is needed to attend an elite institution. She feels that, while social mobility is not the reason she applied to university, she is happy with her choice and the experiences it has provided.

Summary of overarching themes of interview

- Chloe's parents are divorced and her mother is an alcoholic; as a result she now lives full-time with her father.
- She feels that because of the schools she attended she missed out on a lot of academic and extracurricular activities that her university peers experienced. As a result, this has affected her overall confidence and she is quick to feel under-qualified even if this is not the case.
- Chloe feels that she had changed her accent and dress in a way to fit into the university. Regardless, she believes there are cultural differences that she will never experience, and as a result, she felt that she, therefore, does things incorrectly (see cheese story),
- She has an understanding of the impact of social class on experiences, and that a meritocratic society does not exist due to circumstances.

5.3 Antonine University—David

David, 25, White Scottish, Scotland

Background

David is a second-year undergraduate from Livingston, Scotland, and he considers himself low-income. His parents split up when he was very young and his mother remarried. David no longer has a relationship with his biological father. He describes the situation:

I know who he is. He still lives in the same town. We ended on good terms. I think ... my mum hadn't split up on good terms, it just wasn't working. And I'd seem him for a number of years after. And then I eventually stopped seeing him. And then one day I think when I was 11, I met up with him and ... he took me to this lady's house. I didn't really know who [she] was. And everyone was pinching my cheek and kissing me and stuff. I had no idea who any of the people were. Eventually I think I said, I didn't feel comfortable with ... hanging out with my dad because I didn't really know him. And I was really anxious about telling him that. So I think I eventually told him that I didn't want to see him anymore on that sort of basis which is quite a big step for a kid to take.

During this time, his mother remarried a man David considers to be a father figure. His stepfather is a computer engineer for the military. His mother and stepfather are no longer together, but David is still in touch with him.

He describes his mother as '*never really [having] a well paying job*'. She had been a cleaner of hotels and of private houses as well as a dinner lady at a primary school. He indicates that currently she is unemployed (and had been for years) due to a job application going wrong. Because she had such a negative experience, he feels it knocked her confidence and made her feel unemployable. When this incident took place, he remembered

waking up hearing her wailing and crying. I think it really knocked her confidence with work. That was really upsetting. And she hasn't worked since then.

David describes himself as the first person who wanted to get out of his home town and do better than just '*get along, making money and paying bills*'. In high school he passed all of his standard grades, but left in fifth year with aspirations of going to college for photography. During his second year of college, he left and got a job in a restaurant. It was good money, but at the time when he believed he was in line for promotion, he was fired. It was at this time his life experienced a tremendous amount of turmoil. He lost his job, his long-term girlfriend ended their relationship, and his best friend decided he no longer wanted to be friends.

I was living in a flat at the time that I was going to share with my girlfriend, so I had to move back into with my mum and I just sort of stood back and thought what am I doing with my life. I've got to do something. I've got to think about what I liked, and I wanted to go back to school. I thought about what I liked and I was good at science. So I applied to a college and applied for access to biological sciences at West Lothian College.

As a backup, he also applied for work at another restaurant. Two weeks prior to starting his new job, he found out that he was offered a place at West Lothian. At a crossroads between employment and education, he selected college and was

one of the highest performing students in his class. David applied to universities 'to have a laugh and see what happens'. He was shocked to find out he had been admitted to university.

Family resources

David feels that his mother and half-sister are proud of him. He speaks with his mother about his university experiences, which she likes discussing with him. He remembers first telling his family about going to university, and his former stepfather not being very encouraging. David remembered him asking 'why are you going to university, [can't] you just get a job or something?'

It seems that his former stepfather and extended family thought he would not stick with higher education.

I get that a lot from the family like I'll tell my family I'm a bit homesick or I miss my mum, and the first thing they say is 'don't quit university' and I'm like 'I'm not going to quit university, stop thinking that'. Or my family will say 'stick in, stick it in, stick with it!' and I'm like, 'I'm going to, I'm in my second year now, I'm not going to just leave'.

While his mother seems supportive, the rest of his family is perplexed or unconvinced that he will complete university. Despite such doubts, there is one person outside David's family who provides support: his stepfather's brother, Henry. Henry lives with his partner and works as a market and advertising manager in London. David has always looked up to both men —wanted to have their lives, go on the vacations they booked. So David's aspirations of having a better life through education stem from his former stepfather's side of the family.

My uncle has always said that I am very lucky ... one of the first, I think the first person that's got out of Livingston. And we talk about Livingston as a sort of prison that you need to escape. But I am proud of where I am from, I am proud of Livingston, but it's not where I want to end up.

University finance

Being Scottish, David's tuition is paid for, but paying for his living expenses has proved a serious challenge. He explained the challenges by recalling each year of his undergraduate experience.

During his first year, David received an access bursary, a student loan, an accommodation bursary (which covered his accommodation in total), and an independent student bursary from SAAS. On top of these bursaries, he took out a loan from the 'student loan place'. The August prior to entering HE, he managed to save £1,000, so he felt he was well covered. An issue arose when David needed to enrol in a compulsory course for ecology students and had to stay in accommodation five days longer than his bursary covered. As a result it was an unexpected bill of around £120.00, which was covered by an additional student loan. His second year, he continued to receive all of the same bursaries minus that covering accommodation. Because he chose to move out of university accommodation during his second year, David's rent increased. David realised that he was not going to have enough money to cover his expenses without applying for an emergency loan of £1,700. David finds it impossible to come up with additional money due to his finances being so tight.

He is aware that, compared to most of his peers he is '*pretty poor*'.

I see a lot of students that mention that 'ohh I'll need to ask my mum for an extra £500 this week'. And I sort of find that ... I don't think it's fair. That they can ask for money, what am I meant to do if I get stuck? I've got nobody to ask to get money from. If I get stuck, I get stuck and that's that. 'Cause financially I'll have to leave university, if I ever get stuck to that degree. For a lot of people they have a safety net. I resent them. I resent them for them just having to talk to their parents to get money or to other people. They don't understand what it is to try and balance your finances.

He knew financing higher education would be a struggle, but did not realise how much resentment he would develop towards his more wealthy peers.

Fitting in & campus life

Arriving on campus he was excited to begin a new chapter in life; nonetheless, it seems that his peers caused him to resent his own socioeconomic status.

I remember just feeling the resentment again. I despised the ... sort of [upper class] fashion type things. It seems like I've passed that, so I don't really care about it but ... that was something to get used to.

While on one hand David resents his fellow students, he is really proud to attend an elite institution. In speaking of his pride, David reflects on what is causing his resentment.

I am sort of a fish out of the water I think. It's like, it's hard to explain. I think maybe it's jealousy. Maybe ... I wish ... I had two parents that were upper class that could look after me and that's where the resentment comes from. But I was wanting to better myself and that's why I am coming to uni. I want to maybe show off a little and say I am at the university, being lower class ... and being able to tell people that I am at [Antonine] raises their opinion of you.

I think the resentment is tied to the jealousy and again perhaps if I began making enough money, I wouldn't have that jealousy. I wouldn't have that resentment. But I also think part to do with the resentment is everyone's so young, and they're all so ... I'm 25 and I've done all the drinking and stuff ... so that doesn't really bother me, so I am more interested in the university rather than all the university life. And it seems like all the young people are so pretentious playing frisbee in the parks, it's such a cliché. I don't know why, I've always hated that. That sort of thing, I think it must just be upper class, and I struggle.

The university has an American feel, David believes, or at least it tries to conform to American standards. David feels that because of American movies that feature universities, that has shifted the culture, and, thus, had made Scottish students feel that the experience they see in the movies is the only valid university experience. It sets the example of how they should behave.

It is clear that David sees the typical student as someone who conforms to a specific culture. He does not believe in being someone that you are not, and would rather be authentic than be the typical student and conform.

Relating to an elite institution

David was asked how authentic he felt while at university. His response was based on how he perceived university students should act. He also disclosed that he suffered from ADHD and that it really had an impact on his concentration.

I have trouble concentrating from the ADHD as a kid and whenever I am sitting in the library, I am trying to look like I am working, I am aware of people working. And I am working. But sometimes it's really hard for me. I think that's the only time that I sort of put on a show, 'ohh look at me I am in the library, I am working'.

He reported he needed to put on a show of studying in a public place to prove that he in fact belongs in higher education.

While David does not want to conform to the culture of HE, his statement above indicates that he is not immune to conforming in terms of study habits. He seems to have entered HE with preconceived notions of acceptance in the admissions process. He admitted that he did not feel he would have an equal chance of being accepted into each university he applied. It was particularly at the elite institution he is currently attending that he felt he had the least chance of acceptance, regardless of the fact that it was the only university he wanted to attend.

[I had] pre-existing thoughts of how elite university was. But you know, I am me. I am from Livingston. Come from a low-income family. I am not sure I would fit in at [Antonine]. I wasn't sure I'd have the smarts to get in [here]. But I did. And I am proud to go here.

David suggested that he is an intensely private individual and would consider himself a 'loner'. He felt that most of undergraduate culture was geared towards partying and drinking; therefore, he was searching for activities he could engage in. The overall culture of the university, he feels, revolves around its social scene and does not cater to all students.

I wish there was more things [here] that I could enjoy. I like going to the theatre. I like listening to music. I like classical music. Maybe I resent the fact that there's not a lot of stuff aimed [at those] who like stuff like that. But a lot aimed at people who enjoy drinking and partying. I've always thought much of society is people who like that sort of thing. Fashion as well, everyone wearing the same thing, ridiculous. Yea, there is a culture.

Participation in support programmes

David receives many grants and bursaries in order to attend higher education. He was unaware of bridge or support programmes on campus. The only programme he had engaged with was 'the advice place', which aided him when he was experienced severe financial difficulty mentioned above.

Social class

David is not convinced that Scotland is a meritocratic society. He believes favour is given to those who are more attractive and work hard. One exception to this is in science. He feels, within the academy, once your work reaches a certain level, you are welcome into the community and your opportunities are equal. Looks, it seems, are not important in science as they are in the wider society.

I don't think there is equal opportunities in [Antonine] for everybody. I don't think your background plays a role... as long as you got your qualifications and stuff. I think it looks better, if somebody's got a similar qualification [as] you but they're better looking, I think they are more likely to get the job. So I think looks is the only thing that prevents somebody for getting a job that they'd be qualified for. If somebody else applied for it that was better looking, they'd get it.

Summary of overarching themes from interview

- David is a 25-year-old undergraduate from Livingston, Scotland. His parents divorced early in his life and his mother remarried (and had now again split). He no longer has a relationship with his biological father.
- While David's mother is supportive of HE, his stepfather and extended family are not convinced that he will complete HE.

- There were several life changing events that led to David enrolling into college and then entering HE.
- He focuses extensively on students 'conforming' and seems to hold a lot of ill feelings towards other students, particularly regarding their finances.

Appendix 6: Table of parental employment by student participants

The list of parental employment from Chapter 6 provides some insight into the family background and exposure to social and cultural capital each student experienced prior to entering higher education. Of the 30 participants, only 25 were first generation (3 from Great Lakes and 2 from Antonine had parents who attended at least some level of higher education). Though in one instance (Michael) his university-educated father was unemployed and homeless.

Table 6.1A Parental employment as indicated by student participants

| Great Lakes University | South Hadrian University | Antonine University |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Social worker | Web developer | Antique restoration |
| Body shop/mechanic | Engineer | Beautician |
| Sales person | Garden centre assistant | Nurse |
| Certified nursing assistant (CNA) | Writer for local paper | Whisky distiller |
| Factory worker | Nuclear plant | Waste management |
| Movie theatre manager | Civil service | Cleaner |
| Secretary | Grocery store check out | Dinner lady |
| Construction worker | Manager | Manager |
| Grocery store (x2) | Army (x2) | Insurance |
| Chronic unemployment (x2) | Unemployed (x2) | Army (x2) |
| | | Unemployed |

Appendix 7: Tables created from information forms and interviews
Table 7.1A Responses of all student participants: personal and education background

| Great Lakes | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|---|------------|------------------------|
| Pseudonym | Specified gender | Subject of study | Age | Race/ethnicity |
| Jessica | F | Human Development & Family | 21 | Mexican |
| Michael | M | Anthropology | 23 | African American |
| Christopher | M | Sociology | 22 | Akan (African) |
| Ashley | F | Psychology & Spanish | 21 | Hispanic |
| Kayla | F | Sociology | 23 | Black/White |
| Sarah | F | African Language, Literature, & Political Science | 20 | Mexican American |
| Samantha | F | History/History of Science | 21 | Tibetan |
| Matthew | M | Computer Science | 18 | Laotian |
| Joshua | M | MHR & Chinese | 22 | Vietnamese/Chinese |
| Brandon | M | Biology | 20 | Black/African American |
| Elizabeth | F | History & Psychology | 20 | White |
| Taylor | F | Pre-Nursing | 20 | Hmong American |
| South Hadrian | | | | |
| Pseudonym | Specified gender | Subject of study | Age | Race/ethnicity |
| Chloe | F | Sociology | 22 | White English |
| Jack | M | English Literature & History | 21 | White Welsh |
| Emily | F | English Literature & philosophy | 19 | White English |
| Megan | F | English Literature | 21 | White English |
| Sophie | F | Education Studies & Sociology | 19 | White Northern Irish |
| Charlotte | F | Sociology | 19 | White English |
| Hannah | F | Ed Studies & Geography | 20 | White English |
| Olivia | F | History | 19 | White English |

| | | | | |
|------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------|-----------------------|
| Thomas | M | English Literature | 20 | White English |
| James | M | Mathematics | 21 | White English |
| Antonine | | | | |
| Pseudonym | Specific gender | Subject of study | Age | Race/ethnicity |
| Emma | F | Sociology and Psych | 35 | White Scottish |
| Lauren | F | Primary/Community | 29 | White Scottish |
| Rebecca | F | Social Work | 40 | White Scottish |
| Amy | F | Primary Education | 25 | White Scottish |
| Ryan | M | PE Education | 19 | White Scottish |
| Andrew | M | Primary Education | 20 | White Scottish |
| David | M | Biological Science | 25 | White Scottish |
| Rachel | F | Biological Science | 22 | White Scottish |

Table 7.2A Responses of all student participants: finance**Great Lakes University: finance**

| Pseudonym | Financing tuition fees | Financial maintenance costs | Debt amount | Debt anxiety | Employment | Parent support |
|-------------|------------------------------------|---|-------------|--------------|-----------------------|--|
| Jessica | Free tuition | Pell/scholarship/ employment | \$8,000 | 4 | Y | N |
| Michael | Pell/grant/employment | Employment | \$30,000 | 4 | Y | Y/ v. minimal less than \$5.00 per month |
| Christopher | Free tuition | Scholarship | \$6,000 | 4 | Y | N |
| Ashley | Pell/ employment | Employment | 0 | 5 | Y | N |
| Kayla | Free tuition | Pell/scholarship/loans/ employment | \$8,000 | 2 | Y | N |
| Sarah | Free tuition | Scholarship/employment | NA | 1 | Y | Y/ 200 per m |
| Samantha | Free tuition | Scholarship/loans/ employment | \$17,000 | 4 | Y | N |
| Matthew | Free tuition | Scholarship/loans/parents/ employment | \$3,000 | 2 | Y | Y/ 50 per m |
| Joshua | Free tuition | Employment/ Pell/ scholarship/ employment | 0 | 1 | Y | N |
| Brandon | Pell/scholarship/ employment | Employment | \$5,000 | 2 | Y | N |
| Elizabeth | Pell/loans/private loans (bank) | Loans/parents | \$40,000 | 4 or 5 | N | Y/ 300 per m |
| Taylor | Pell/scholarship | Scholarship/employment/ parents | 0 | 2 | N (but am usually) | N |

South Hadrian University: finance

| Pseudonym | Financing tuition fees | Financial maintenance costs | Debt amount | Debt anxiety | Employment | Parent support |
|-----------|------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--------------|------------|-------------------|
| Chloe | Govt grant/ loan | Employment | £12,000 | 4 | N | N |
| Jack | Loans | Loans | £20,000 | 1 | Y | N |
| Emily | Loans | Loans/Parents | £42,000 (answered only £1,000, however) | 3 | N | Y/ £50 per m |
| Megan | Loans | Loans/Employment/Grant | £27,000 tuition + £18,000 maintenance | 3 | Y | N |
| Sophie | Loans | Loans/ Own Savings | £42,000 | 2 | N | Y/ no spec amount |
| Charlotte | Loans | Grant/Loans | £30,000 | 2 | N | N |
| Hannah | Loans | Loans/Parents/ Employment | £42,000 | 2 | N | Y/ £300 per m |
| Olivia | Loans/parents | Scholarship/Loans | £30,000 | 4 | Y | N |
| Thomas | Govt grant/ loan | Scholarship/ Employment | £40,000 | 1 | N | N |
| James | Loans | Loans/Parents | £13,000 + | 2 | N | Y/ £400 per m |

Antonine University: finance

| Pseudonym | Financing tuition fees | Financial maintenance costs | Debt amount | Debt anxiety | Employment | Parent support |
|-----------|------------------------|--|-------------|--------------|------------|-----------------|
| Emma | Free tuition | Loans | £23,000 | 5 | N | N |
| Lauren | Free tuition | Loans | NA | 2 | N | N |
| Rebecca | Free tuition | Loans/employment | £20,000 | 2 | Y | N |
| Amy | Free tuition | Scholarship/loans/ employment | £20,000 + | 4 | Y | N |
| Ryan | Free tuition | Loans & mum pays for flat | £15,000 min | 2 | N | Y/ £40 bus pass |
| Andrew | Free tuition | Scholarship/loans/ employment | NA | 1 | Y | N |
| David | Free tuition | Loans/employment/ applied for emergency loan | £32,000 | 2 | Y | N |
| Rachel | Free Tuition | SAAS Bursary/ Parents/Employment | £1,000 | 2 | Y | Y/ £100 per m |

Table 7.3A Responses of all student participants: capital and *habitus*

Great Lakes University: capital

| Pseudonym | Family background & resources | Educational support or indifference | Pre-university networks | | University networks | | Types of cultural experiences noted |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------------|--|
| | | | Support programmes or teacher support | Family | Support programmes & academic staff support | Co-curricular activities | |
| Jessica | First-gen; Family responsibility/ supporting family | Difficulties in school; language barrier | PEOPLE; Use of Pipeline programmes as network | Understanding HE through friends | Involved in 2 university support programmes (PEOPLE & CAE) | Y/Y | Language barrier; Bilingual; Citizenship & privilege; Skin Colour |
| Michael | Moved frequently | First male graduating; Lack of education expectation; Black males and lack of expectation | Use of Pipeline programmes as network | NA | AAP/CAE/ McNair/ [GL]ANNER | Y | University was cultural exposure and freedom from life; uni opened my mind |
| Christopher | Finding success despite a lack of ability to access resources | Feeling pressure to attend & finish uni | PEOPLE; Use of Pipeline programmes as network | Found employment through friends before came to uni | Involved in 3 university programmes AAP, CAE, PEOPLE; Found employment through family friends | Y | Bilingual; Citizenship & privilege |
| Ashley | First gen; Scared of HE; believes minorities | NA | NA | struggled with networks | Pathways (2) | Y | Language or cultural choice to fit in by parent; Bilingual; Traveled |

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|
| Ashley cont... | have increased chance of being admitted to HE | | | | | | to Puerto Rico, Scotland, Ireland |
| Kayla | Bilingual | Feeling pressure to attend & finish uni | PEOPLE | Friends dropped out of HE or never attended so had no idea what to expect | PEOPLE/ CeO | Y | Traveled to Denmark |
| Sarah | First-Gen; Unfamiliar with HE outside of movies; Family responsibility/ supporting family | Feeling pressure to attend & finish uni; Family pride | PEOPLE | Social connections informed university choice | PEOPLE | Y | Skin Colour Differences; National Security Language Initiative US Gov't |
| Samantha | First-Gen; Parents are political refugees | Feeling pressure to attend & finish uni; Parents wanted trade vs academic | PEOPLE | NA | PEOPLE/ CAE | Y | Political refugees |
| Matthew | First-Gen; Family too busy to focus on education | Lots of pressure on attending HE | PEOPLE | alone a lot due to parents work schedules | Involved with PEOPLE; Sibling employment connections | N | Language barrier; Love of classical music; Participating in orchestra |
| Joshua | First-Gen; Family responsibility/ supporting family; English as second language | University = becoming America | PEOPLE | Siblings helped him find work | Involved with 2 programmes CAE, PEOPLE; Sibling employment connections | Y | English as second language |
| Brandon | First-Gen; Family too busy to focus | First male graduating; Lack of | Teachers thought he was autistic so placed in Special Education classes | Inquisitiveness to combat a lack of connections; parents | CAE/ Multicultural Student Center | Y | Church provided different experiences |

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|--|--|---|--|--------|---|---|
| Brandon cont... | on education; Moved frequently | education expectation; Taught that education is enemy | | forgot to submit school registration so had to attend poor secondary school | | | |
| Elizabeth | First-Gen; Parents Jailed | Parents do not understand HE | None | Understanding HE through friends | None | N | NA |
| Taylor | first-gen; Family responsibility/ supporting family; | Family too busy to focus on education; strict division b/w family and education | Involved in two programmes AAP/PEOPLE; PEOPLE reason she applied to elite institution | Friends never attended HE | PEOPLE | Y | Language barrier; Political refugees |

Great Lakes University: *habitus*

| Pseudonym | University student characteristics | University culture | Belonging |
|-------------|---|--|--|
| Jessica | Not diverse; 99% from white towns | Not owning race issues; University publications mislead in terms of diversity; privilege is the hardest thing for white ppl to accept | N; \$; language; background |
| Michael | White; Wealthy; Clear division between students and locals | University saved him; a lot of uni pride in student body | N; religion & economics |
| Christopher | White; Wealthy | Frat culture | N; academic & social life |
| Ashley | White; the uni tries to be diverse | Not owning race issues; Spirit stems from sports | N; shy and ethnicity; doesn't fit in |
| Kayla | Not diverse; Coasties & Sconnies | Racist comments | N; cultural diff |
| Sarah | White; Wealthy | Racist comments; Spirit stems from sports | N; working class identity diff from Uni |
| Samantha | Spirited, love sports | Not inclusive; Spirit stems from sports | Y; no courses on own ethnic group |

| | | | |
|-----------|---|--|---|
| Matthew | Locals vs uni; White | Individualistic; University publications mislead in terms of diversity; Happy School with Happy People | N; lack of diversity |
| Joshua | White; Wealthy; Rarely see people that look like me | | N; diversity |
| Brandon | Not diverse | Not owning race issues; University publications mislead in terms of diversity | N; color/ achievements |
| Elizabeth | Enough diversity | Frat culture; a lot of school pride; Spirit stems from sports | Y |
| Taylor | Feels like she has nothing in common | Doesn't fit with culture | N; lack of connection; Trying to find a purpose |

South Hadrian University: capital

| Pseudonym | Family background & resources | Educational support or indifference | Pre-university networks | | University networks | | Types of cultural experiences noted |
|-----------|---|---|--|---|---|--------------------------|---|
| | | | Support programmes or teacher support | Family | Support programmes & academic staff support | Co-curricular activities | |
| Chloe | Fist-Gen; Separated Parents; Alcohol abuse, physical abuse, mental health | Parent's don't understand HE, marks | EMA Recipient; Had interview at Oxford, but no practice interview so unprepared and underdressed | | Reach for Excellence/ EMA | Y | Worry about lack of cultural experience; Studied abroad in Kenya & taught |
| Jack | Separated Parents; Bullied in school | Teachers as support; Unable to travel to visit unis | | Family just dropped him off at school-only exposure to HE | Haven't built up connections | Y | |
| Emily | First-Gen; moved around b/c dad in military; experienced severe | Parents encouraged her to go to uni | Part of Aspire, Aim, Achieve | Parents took her to open days; oversaw personal | South Hadrian Grant & Disability Services | N/Y | Awarded internship in London turned down due to lack |

| Emily cont... | bullying | | | statements etc | | | of funds |
|---------------|---|--|--|--|----|-----|---|
| Megan | First-Gen; attended struggling secondary school; illness caused her to leave 6th form | Parents supportive but worry about fees | Use of support/pipeline; Felt channeled down an educational route | Relied on teachers over parents | NA | Y | Learning culture on campus |
| Sophie | First-Gen; Army family; Separated Parents; Alcohol abuse, physical abuse, mental health | Pressure to Succeed | NA | Failure if didn't attend HE; Aunt is lecturer; Church as network | NA | Y | Orchestra & concert band, project leader of university SCA; open day rep; welfare committee |
| Charlotte | Mum's now at uni; First-Gen; Separated Parents | Pressure to Succeed; Parents supportive but felt 'someone has made it out of the coal village' | NA | | NA | N | |
| Hannah | First-Gen; thought to go apprenticeship route; believes she's not academic | Parents unsure of HE due to cost; Dad took off work to open days; parents 'Googled' everything | NA | Parents asked lots of questions | NA | N/Y | Notes the social inequality b/w town & gown |
| Olivia | First-Gen; Bullied in school; twin attending 'less' prestigious institution | Teachers as support | Summer Programme School as support; Use of support/pipeline of Supported Progression | Hard for parents | NA | N/Y | Joined choir |
| Thomas | First-Gen-and only person in family to go to uni; Struggled | Teachers as support; always wanted to go to | Using prior teachers as connections and help with UCAS | Supportive, but stood back | NA | Y | Works for Charity to help inner-city |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------|---|---|----|--|---|----|--|--|
| | with sexual orientation | uni; parents trusted he'd make right decision | | | | | children; part of the social committee | |
| James | First-Gen; Miners family; had few friends; religious upbringing | Teachers were support | NA | | Have small group of close friends/ family | NA | Y | Studied Theatre; Arts; Catholic society; squash; fencing |

South Hadrian University: *habitus*

| Pseudonym | University student characteristics | University culture | Belonging |
|-----------|--|---|---|
| Chloe | Posh accents; RaHS; Middle Class | Work hard/play hard; 'Things you only hear at this uni'; Brie; learned how to properly cut cheese & rules of bread and soup | N; co-curric; confidence; accent; family background |
| Jack | Rich; is Ethnic variation/diverse | Heavy gossip; charts to indicate peers behaviour | Y |
| Emily | Posh accents; From good schools | Heavy gossip; Lack of understanding of student HE needs | N; interaction with wealthy |
| Megan | RaHS; lads, but feels people are individuals | Work hard/play hard | N; temp felt far from home |
| Sophie | RaHS; Old fashion; Elitist | Next version of Oxbridge; uni shows off a lot | Y |
| Charlotte | Middle Class | Very social; very active, but do think there are some working-class students which is a surprise; wine & cheese society | N; depression; hard to engage |
| Hannah | Elitist, middle-class | Rude to locals; Brie | Y |
| Olivia | Posh accents; Middle Class; Southern; driven | Represents tradition; original uni | N; cannot relate to conversations |
| Thomas | Posh accents; Rich | Work hard/play hard; Amazing location for uni | Y |
| James | See's S. Hadrian students in opposition to elite uni | Uni leadership failed students; Uni in opposition to Oxbridge | N; not liked |

| Antonine University: capital | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|---|---|--|--------------------------------|--|-----|--|
| Pseudonym | Family background & resources | Educational support or indifference | Pre-university networks | | University networks | | Types of cultural experiences noted |
| | | | Support programmes or teacher support | Family | Support programmes & academic staff support | | |
| Emma | First-Gen; in foster care; Council Estate/poverty; Mother abusive | Opposition to family, traitor for attending HE; Adult student; education wasn't for likes of us | Access Course | Actively dissuaded her | Lack/Lost friends; being a lone wolf | Y/N | Seeing a lot of different groups on campus |
| Lauren | Parents live in separate countries; dropped out at 16 | Mother used inheritance to send child to better school | Did not meet conditional offer, attended college to improve marks; had no teacher support b/c brothers bad reputations | | Student indicates Dyslexia; Tutor not supportive | N | Lived with father in Italy |
| Rebecca | First-Gen; left school for 'girl-appropriate career'; Illness in family meant repeat year | Adult student | Access Course | adult student | NA | N | Love being at Uni, want to learn a lot |
| Amy | First-Gen; Father dropped out of uni; adult student | Extended family support | NA | Extended family & Aunt | NA | Y/N | Lived in NZ |
| Ryan | M.C. background but is working/has loans & bursary | Immediate family caused delay of uni | NA | Mother used church connections | PE student, referees; job for future employment | N | Catholic son to Protestant school |
| Andrew | First-Gen; | Family supportive | Teacher support | leaned on | NA | N | NA |

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|--------------------------|----------------------------------|--|-----|--------------------------|
| Andrew cont... | parents divorced | | | teachers | | | |
| David | First-Gen; Council Estate/poverty | Extended family support; Family unsure would stick with uni | NA | Relies on uncle for support | Board member of society; Lack/Lost friends; being alone/ being a lone wolf | Y | Theatre, classical music |
| Rachel | First-Gen; Siblings dropped out due to drugs and gambling | Had to put education aside for family | LEAPs pipeline programme | Family too involved with brother | NA | Y/N | NA |

Antonine University: *habitus*

| Pseudonym | University student characteristics | University culture | Belonging |
|-----------|--|---|--|
| Emma | Yas; Int'l/English Students; or Private school students | Not offered fliers b/c don't look like a student; Face among thousands | N; mature, single mum |
| Lauren | PE students have bad rep and that inhibits experience | Judgment of some students; academic staff treat her differently; tutor is dismissive and not respectful | N; older & feel others are immature |
| Rebecca | Int'l/English Students; Rich/middle class | Teachers indicate quota System | N; mature Student/ anonymous |
| Amy | Yas; Int'l/English Students | International; Londoners; uni quota system for WP | Y |
| Ryan | Int'l/English Students; Students of Asian background | Pride in institution | N; only one from area so felt out of place |
| Andrew | Highly Academic; dedicated to studies | Competitive; good institution | N; doubting academics |
| David | Students act like they are American | Conform to America Unis | Y |
| Rachel | Yas; Int'l/English Students; Big hair, Barbour jackets, Hunter boots | NA | N; 'common accent' |

Table 7.4A Responses of all student participants: identity

Great Lakes University: identity

| Pseudonym | Transition to university | | | Prepared? | Fitting in | Pride in uni | Agency & identity |
|-------------|--|--------------------------------|---|--|--|--------------|---|
| | Feelings of transition | Support programme participants | The transition | | | | |
| Jessica | Difference b/w summer school and reality; where are all the students of colour | Y-entire UG enrolment | Quiet in the classroom; something is wrong and you are it; I am here b/c of the support I received from the programmes—'if you removed the programmes then let this place burn' | N; confidence | Feelings about uni are mixed; never felt like a [Buffalo]; lonely; careful not to share feelings or true identity; issues of race; hate this place, hate the people, hate the environment it fosters | Y | When you're at home you're a totally different person; Separation of home self vs. uni self |
| Michael | Focused | Y-entire UG enrolment | First priority was employment; ppl still expect me to be an athlete b/c of my height and race | N; lack of resources & poor rep of own community | Very different culture/ putting a mask on my mannerisms, vernacular are different; skin colour and race | Y | I always have on a mask; my family feels I talk down to them; you trade success for culture |
| Christopher | Felt academically behind; the only minority in class is defeating | Y-entire UG enrolment | Felt undermined in my classes as a black male | N; curric & not guided in HS | Never felt comfortable it was defeating | Y | Hoping to achieve the American Dream |
| Ashley | Walked around with map; excited | Y- 2 yrs of UG enrolment | Peers who aren't enrolled in this programme feel superior b/c they didn't have to jump | N; curric difficult | Feel proud; too white, but too ethnic struggling to find place-did find others like me; self conscious | Y | I struggle with identity and seeking acceptance (crying); I am White washed |

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|-----------------------|--|---|--|---|--|
| Ashley cont... | | | through hoops | | about speaking Spanish | | |
| Kayla | Culture shock | Y-entire UG enrolment | Where I was housed was far away so hard; my grades have been a struggle | Y | Academic issues affect the fit; being multiracial is hard on campus affects fit | Y | Hoping to achieve the American Dream |
| Sarah | Felt separated from family | Y-entire UG enrolment | Hard to explain schedule to family; hard to make own food | Y; struggle with freedom | A curse to fit in (due to skin colour) | Y | Friends are critical of uni, but I love it; the guilt behind the success; the pressure to make it; trying to 'lift as I climb' |
| Samantha | Excited | Y-entire UG enrolment | Never knew what the academic schedule would be like; didn't know there were breaks b/w classes | N; writing | Never felt like a 'Buffalo'; race in modules makes it hard to fit in | Y | Agency is tied to the larger American Immigrant struggle |
| Matthew | Wanted to take advantage of opportunity; I have to work hard--my dad never had this opportunity | Y-entire UG enrolment | My friends have changed-I have too; developed a small base & plans to branch out | Y; PEOPLE | Very individualistic so hard to find group | Y | Haven't changed the way I am, but be careful what you say to ppl |
| Joshua | Culture shock | Y-entire UG enrolment | In small classes it's noticeable (race) | Y; SCE | Only minority in class | Y | Having pride is not an indication of changing; Everyone seems surprised I attend this uni like it was a feat or task to get in |
| Brandon | Felt rich because I got my scholarship | Y-entire UG enrolment | I don't balance, 'it just flows until something blows up then I am like, okay' | N; not told to involved told to segregate | Difference in dress; ppl from home think I'm bougy; funny, ppl think I am rich (cause of dress), but I was homeless before I came; I lie about who I | Y | I am a chameleon; my vocab/clothing/viewpoints change; b/c of family poverty there is a push/pull b/w home and uni |

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------|--|---|---|---|--|
| Brandon cont... | | | | | am; my life feels impossible | | |
| Elizabeth | Had friends already b/c they went to my high school | N | Second transition as transfer from other uni | Y; intellect; N b/c not encouraged or talked to about Uni | Feel proud | Y | I have the ability not to [live] my parent's lives' |
| Taylor | Nervous; out of place | Y-entire UG enrolment | 1st year I went home a lot cause of homesickness; ppl want to party/drink, I just want to pass | N; didn't know what to expect | Not involved; feelings about uni are mixed; Lucky vs. smart enough to attend; I am not as smart as my peers | Y | B/c of family poverty there is a push/pull b/w home and uni; community is pulling not helping; trying to be on own; making alt choices to childhood friends; being female in community creates less opportunity; pressure of future; give parents the American dream; no certainty of future |

South Hadrian University: identity

| Pseudonym | Transition to university | | | Prepared? | Fitting in | Pride in uni | Agency & identity |
|-----------|---|--------------------------------|--|-----------|--|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| | Feelings of transition | Support programme participants | The transition | | | | |
| Chloe | Crazy; people were different & confident; excited about possibilities | | Experiencing formal; drinking wine; the uni is like Harry Potter; found friends easily | Y | My accent is different; I changed how I dress; not knowing authors, classical music, don't ski- so that is the difference; expected not to fit in, but did; changed accent to southern; shocked by peers (good); examples of culture shock | Y | Uni helping her become more authentic |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|--|--------------------|---|---|---|
| Jack | Excited; proud | First person to attend prestigious uni | Y | Peers' expensive trips/holiday means he was excluded; didn't fit in with 'champagne lads' | Y | Realized this uni didn't accept many from his social class; many snobs at uni & am becoming one; worried about parents in their trackies |
| Emily | Intimidated; family competition to see who would cry last | Felt inside the uni bubble | N; finance | By 2 nd year let self go & had more fun; issues with lads; Lads vs Lords; dark side of uni; couldn't attend uni function cause of cost; boat clubs and champagne society are just outdated | N | Uni flips working-class culture (WC culture appropriated by MC) |
| Megan | Felt supported; parents argued how to get to uni; waitressed for wealthy now was attending school with them | | Y | The school you attended, the words you use it tells people something about you | Y | Come to uni to become better; just me at the end of the day; uni plays huge role in your identity |
| Sophie | Nervous; excited | Got involved right away to help with loneliness | Y | Changed accent to southern; called a 'posh tw*t'; I've--not aspired--but maybe turned into the rahs; trying to fit in without knowing it; changed clothing | Y | Still had family support and fits in balancing; b/c has clothing and new accent feels like she can speak to the posh accent ppl who went to posh school; hoping uni prestige gets me a good job |
| Charlotte | Apprehensive b/c of class | Depression made her withdrawn; anxiety to join in; language issues with locals | Y/N family setback | Proud but overwhelmed to attend; there is an invisible class line & its reflected in clothing, overall look, accent | Y | Shock to go home; changes in friendships; wont let uni change her |
| Hannah | Sick & upset | Gone from a top | Y | Picked up odd word | Y | Ppl say I've changed, I don't |

| | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|--|-------|--|---|--|
| Hannah cont... | when parents left | student to the middle b/c so many good students | | pronunciation; no northerners at uni | | think so; want to be hardworking (WC), but have money (MC); Not sure can stay WC b/c of uni |
| Olivia | Sad when parents left; my parents cried | The Latin before meals is still weird | Y | Changed clothing; Odd that peers knew Latin in choir; a minority in my own region; worried about N/S judgments; feel like I made it; worried about accent; feels out of place b/c of school attended | Y | Feel like went to private school, but didn't; sees self as upper working class; academic & personality fit, though from north; sometimes I envy (my peers) |
| Thomas | The welcome was awesome but overwhelming | Overspent and was very poor 1st term | Y | Family & Uni separation; proud I go here; air of this being only MC, but I'm here and people can be here if they work hard | Y | Feels guarded with self b/c gay; Proud to go to uni; background not everything can win people over with hard work |
| James | Got on more with locals than peers; massive culture shock | I thought it would be Northern-power, but it's not | Indif | Clinical depression; hard to communicate when had 20 years of difference; the uni men flip lad identity to upper-class | Y | Met a place with my ethos; deep pride in own Yorkshire accent; hard to go home from uni; deeply rooted in Yorkshire roots |

Antonine University: identity

| Pseudonym | Transition to university | | Prepared? | Fitting in | Pride in uni | Agency & identity |
|-----------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|--|--|
| | Feelings of transition | Support programme participants | The transition | | | |
| Emma | Treated with disdain from | A consensus that Access course | Felt less than; 'feel completely and | N; incorp school into life | Disadvantage not just economic but social; | Y Remains in the poverty mentality; treated and feels like a non- |

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------|--|--|--|------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Emma cont... | fellow students; scared; felt like didn't fit in or belong | students are granted a place as part of the university's philanthropic work' | utterly alone/isolated' | diff | Isolation; feels lucky to be enrolled | | student |
| Lauren | Nervous | Help from disability services | B/c of daughter can only be a student 9am to 4pm; overall, not what I imagined | Y | Disadvantage not just economic but social; 9-4 schedule means cannot participate in extracurricular | Y | Had expectations that she was not as intelligent; not good enough |
| Rebecca | Felt lonely | Felt less than non-access students | Entire 1st year was lonely; bit better in 2nd year | Y | Not seen as a student; a face in the crowd | Y | See's herself as firmly working class |
| Amy | Felt old | | After the 1st yr age gap isn't so bad | Y | Feels confident to participate; noticed accent | Y | Secretly vain & likes that she attends elite uni |
| Ryan | Extreme fear when parents left; depression | | Uni is better, but didn't transition just struggled | N; 1st gen, young teachers | Depression means he hasn't fit; Binge eating | Y | Really struggled with depression and binge eating--change who I was |
| Andrew | Bewildered | | Took me time to learn to sleep with city noise | Y/N unprepared academically | Country lad in the city means hard to fit in | Y | Leaving home means leaving people behind; still a country lad |
| David | Resentment of upper class | | Still have resentment/jealousy for peers | Y/N £ stress | Hard to fit in with ADHA; but has found academic field of focus; still fish out of water | Y | Remains in the poverty mentality; resentment of middle-class; jealousy vs pride |
| Rachel | Family not supportive took emotional toll | | Still cannot partake in a lot b/c of money | N; didn't know so much indep. Work | Lack of economic capital huge affect on participation | Y | Not posh just common; uni is proving self |

Appendix 8: Glossary of terms and abbreviations

Academic Advancement Program (AAP): One programme under CAE, AAP provides access to higher education for students with academic potential from minority/disadvantaged backgrounds. The programme begins with a seven-week summer school and continues throughout the student's undergraduate experience.

Center for Academic Excellence (CAE): An umbrella programme that oversees AAP and Pathways (see below). It is a four-year programme that supports students who have been historically underrepresented in higher education, including ethnic minority, first-generation, and low-income students. The programme offers a variety of engagement opportunities such as advising, tutoring programmes, health and wellness events, social events, and graduate school preparation at Great Lakes.

Center for Educational Opportunity (CeO): Federally and state-funded programme in the US that strives to create equal opportunities in higher education. The programme begins with a seven-week summer school and continues throughout the student's undergraduate experience.

[GL]anner Program: [Great Lakes] Aid for Non-Residents is a programme designed to assist low-income, non-resident students pay for university through grants, loans, and employment.

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA): An agency charged with the official collection, analysis, and dissemination of quantitative information pertaining to higher education across the UK.

Higher Education Student Support (HESS): provides financial support to Scottish-domiciled and EU students enrolled in Scottish Higher Education

courses (and Scottish-domiciled students studying in the rest of the UK). The HESS budget is administered by the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS).

McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program (McNair): Part of the Federal TRIO office, the programme provides government support to awarded universities. The universities prepare eligible participants for doctoral studies through research involvement. The undergraduate participants are from disadvantaged backgrounds and show strong academic promise.

Midwestern: A collection of state that make up the Midwest of the United States. The US Census Bureau's definition of the Midwest consists of twelve states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

Multicultural Student Center (MSC): A student centre at Great Lakes with a social justice framework to ensure all students of colour feel connected to a community.

Pathways to Excellence (Pathways): One programme under CAE, Pathways provides access to higher education for students with academic potential from minority/disadvantaged backgrounds. The programme begins in the autumn of the first year enrolled.

POLAR: A measurement that groups neighbourhoods with regard to higher education participation.

Pre-College Enrichment Opportunity Program for Learning Excellence (PEOPLE): A pre-college pipeline programme for minority ethnic, low-income, and first generation university students. The programme continues throughout the undergraduate experience.

Reach for Excellence: A programme that targets young people (years 12 and 13) who demonstrate the academic potential to access a top university, but who might not have previously considered that type of institution.

REACH Scotland: Project to increase access to high-demand professions such as medicine, law, veterinary medicine, and architecture. Partners: Universities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, St. Andrews.

Rest of the UK (rUK): In the Scottish context, rUK refers to the other three nations in the UK: England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Student Agency Awards Scotland (SAAS): An agency of the Scottish Government that provides financial support (tuition fees, bursaries, and grants) to eligible students studying in the UK.

Scottish Funding Council (SFC): A public body that funds Scotland's Further and Higher Education Institutions.

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD): A measurement of area that is used in determining higher education participation. Ranks 6,505 data zones (each consisting of about 500-1,000 residents) and uses 38 indicators across 7 domains: income; employment; health; education, skills, and training; housing; geographic access; and crime.

Student Loans Company (SLC): Administers the actual payment of student loans.

Supported Progression: a programme for students studying in the North East, Cumbria and West Yorkshire who have the potential to study at a highly selective university

TRIO: Established by the Higher Educational Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 1965 in the US. TRIO is not an acronym. It incorporates a trio of programmes: Upward

Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services. TRIO is a pre-university pipeline programme and carries on through university.

Abbreviations

EMA: Education Maintenance Allowance

FE: Further Education

FEC: Further Education Colleges

HE: Higher Education

HEFCE: Higher Education Funding Council for England

HEI: Higher Education Institutions

HNC: Higher National Certificate

HND: Higher National Diploma

NCES: National Center for Educational Studies

NCLB: No Child Left Behind

NS-SEC: National Statistics – Socio-Economic Classification

OFFA: Office for Fair Access

OfS: Office for Students. A new office that combines OFFA and HEFCE

SHEP: Schools for Higher Education Programme

WA: Widening Access

WP: Widening Participation